Autism Conversations
A Framework for Assessment and Intervention Across Age and Ability Levels
Marilyn J. Monteiro, Ph.D.

Arizona Association of School Psychologists
Phoenix, Arizona | November 14, 2019

Agenda Topics

The Autism Spectrum
- Developing the individual narrative
- Developing true intuitive expertise

A Framework for Understanding Autism Spectrum Differences
- The Descriptive Triangle
- Quick Reference Chart
- DSM-5 and the Descriptive Triangle

The MIGDAS-2 Parent and Teacher Questionnaires
- Telling the parent’s story
- Telling the teacher’s story
- Integrating their narratives into your evaluation report

The MIGDAS-2 Diagnostic Interview Protocols: The Sensory-Based Approach
- Using the three-part process that starts with sensory materials and preferred topics
- Introduction to the three protocols for individuals with limited to no verbal fluency, verbally fluent children and adolescents, and verbally fluent adults
- Use of descriptive language to contrast behavior patterns that are consistent with autism spectrum differences and those that are not

Developing the Student’s Individualized Behavioral Profile
- Organizing the collected data and information
- Coming to team consensus on the diagnostic outcome
- Making sense out of conflicting data
- Differential diagnosis and comorbidity considerations
- Discussing the diagnosis with parents and teachers

Using the MIGDAS-2 with Standardized Measures
- CARS2 rating booklets
- SRS-2 and other behavior rating scales
- ADOS-2 modules

Behavior Plans and Educational Recommendations
- Organizing recommendations into three key areas
- Writing effective narrative reports
The Power of Narrative

- Your evaluation work with students, their families, and their teachers is a powerful part of how the student and his or her family shape their story...
- ...and a powerful part of how teachers view the student and the family
- “Change the story and things get better”

The Autism Spectrum Narrative

- Emphasizes areas of strength and differences
- Teaches you to “translate” or reframe negative labeling
- Instead of “obsessive,” “OCD,” and “hyper,” the positive translation becomes...
  - The student organizes and regulates by creating and maintaining predictable routines, including movement routines
- This descriptive reframe shifts the conversation from the negative to a focus on describing the form and function of the behavior routines
- Describing the form and function of routines leads to creative ways to use those patterns to teach deficit skills
- Building with Legos becomes: three-dimensional, visual, low-load language and social thinking
- The function becomes: organizing activity, regulating activity, and blocking out incoming sources of stress (language, social, and demands made by others)
- Shifts the narrative from the story of autism to the story of the individual
- Shifts the narrative from the global criteria to the singular presentation
Autism Spectrum Disorders: No longer a “low incidence” disability
- Current prevalence rate is 1 in 59 (CDC 2018)
- 1 out of 37 boys; 1 out of 151 girls (CDC 2018)
- 15% increase in prevalence since 2012
- Girls are considered to be under-diagnosed
- 46% of children identified with ASD have average or above average intellectual abilities
- Prevalence rate in North America, Europe and Asia is estimated at 1% of population (CDC 2014)
- Co-occurrence with one or more non-ASD developmental, psychiatric, neurological, chromosomal, and genetic disorders is 83% (CDC 2014)
- Co-occurrence with one or more other psychiatric diagnoses is 10% (CDC 2014)

What is the cause?
- No known cause or “cure”
- Defined as a neurobiological developmental disorder
- Current medical research indicates a genetic component
- Current research suggests not a single condition but rather a group of related disorders with similar symptoms but different causes

What types of autism make up the “spectrum”?
- DSM-5 subsumes the full range of ASD differences under Autism Spectrum Disorder:
  - Classic autism or Autistic Disorder
  - Asperger’s Syndrome
  - Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS)
  - Includes Childhood Disintegrative Disorder

Current terminology
- Refer to individuals “with autism” or individuals with an “autism spectrum disorder” or individuals with “autism spectrum differences”
- Avoid referring to an individual as “autistic”

Educational role of the autism evaluation process
- By establishing eligibility you are making an educational diagnosis
- Correctly identifying autism spectrum differences is essential in understanding the underlying behaviors and planning accordingly
- High-functioning students with autism spectrum differences are at risk of being misdiagnosed or unidentified in the school setting
What information is needed to complete an autism evaluation?
- Cognitive and achievement measures
- Speech and language measures
- Adaptive measures if developmental delays are suspected
- Multiple observations
- Parent and teacher interviews
- Screening checklists
- Autism team diagnostic student, parents, and teacher interviews
- Teaming with multidisciplinary colleagues to gain consensus

What are the best practices autism evaluation behavior rating scales?
- Childhood Autism Rating Scale 2 (CARS2-ST and CARS2-HF)
- Social Responsiveness Scale-2 (SRS-2)
- Autism Spectrum Rating Scales (ASRS)
- Gilliam Autism Rating Scale-3 (GARS-3)
- Behavior Assessment System for Children-3 (BASC-3)

What are the best practices autism team evaluation tools?
- Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule-2 (ADOS-2)
- Monteiro Interview Guidelines for Diagnosing the Autism Spectrum-2 (MIGDAS-2)
- Psychoeducational Profile-3 (PEP-3)

Why is it important to combine qualitative and quantitative measures?
- To identify the behavioral profile of students with this complex spectrum of developmental differences, a *multimodal, multidisciplinary* approach is best practice
- The diagnosis is made by considering the preponderance of evidence, with all measures and information taken into consideration
Diagnostic Challenges for School Evaluators

**Telling the story of the individual child, not the story of Autism Spectrum Disorder**

- School psychologists must be familiar with the full range of Autism Spectrum Disorder differences in development and use a range of diagnostic rating scales, tests, and interview techniques to gather diagnostic information.
- This requires developing diagnostic language that emphasizes recognizing deficits, as the global criteria are defined by deficits.
- This negative language creates a barrier between the school psychologist and parents and teachers.
- Creating the story of the individual child requires learning and using descriptive language that shifts the story from global criteria deficits to the student’s individual brain style strengths and differences.

**How does the MIGDAS-2 process target this challenge?**

- The Descriptive Triangle and Visual Framework structure the process of collecting descriptive data to individualize the diagnosis.
- This adds a dimension to the process that cannot be achieved through the use of standardized evaluation measures.
- Standardized measures, including behavior rating scales and the ADOS-2 modules, provide important information and give the school psychologist a set of measures that are linked to a normative sample.
- Oftentimes, there are significant differences between the ratings provided by parents, teachers, and the ADOS-2 testing for an individual child.
- This leaves the school psychologist hesitant to make an autism spectrum diagnosis and susceptible to attributing autism spectrum behavioral differences to other factors (attention challenges, emotional and behavioral challenges, and parenting styles).
- When the individual’s entire narrative profile is organized and laid out using the MIGDAS-2 process, the school psychologist gains confidence in recognizing the pattern of behaviors that are most compellingly described and understood as the autism spectrum brain style.
The Visual Framework for Autism Spectrum Disorder
The Descriptive Triangle

This framework helps you:
Understand the Autism Worldview
Take the Perspective of the Child
Describe Behavior Patterns Instead of Using Labels
Start with Strengths and Then Describe Differences
Link the Student’s Autism Behavior Profile to Practical Interventions and Educational Supports

Language and Communication

Differences in Development

Sensory Use and Interests

Social Relationships and Emotional Responses

Marilyn J. Monteiro, Ph.D.
www.marilynmonteiro.com
www.autismconversations.com

© 2001, 2010, 2014 Marilyn J. Monteiro, Ph.D. All rights reserved.
The Visual Framework for Autism Spectrum Disorder
The Descriptive Triangle

Language and Communication

Differences in Brain Style

Sensory Use and Interests

Social Relationships and Emotional Responses

Marilyn J. Monteiro, Ph.D.
www.marilynmonteiro.com

© 2015 Marilyn J. Monteiro, Ph.D. All rights reserved.
### DSM-5 Autism Spectrum Disorder Levels of Support

#### Using the Autism Conversations Descriptive Triangle to Individualize the Diagnosis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DSM-5 Criteria A</th>
<th>DSM-5 Criteria B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language and Communication (DSM-5 Social Communication)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sensory Use and Interests (DSM-5 Restricted Interests and Repetitive Behaviors)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1: Requiring Support Mild but Significant</td>
<td>Has developed one or more areas of passionate interest that may be age-appropriate in content but unusual in the individual’s focus and intense interest “Sensory-driven” quality to their narrative when sharing information with others about preferred topics Sensory triggers (noises, textures, changes in routine, perceived “unfairness”) lead to decrease in access to language and the individual reverts to the use of inflexible, immature, or unusual behaviors Unusual body movements are subtle but repetitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language skills well developed Usually has developed one or more areas of passionate interest Conversation with others focuses on conveying facts and details about preferred topics “Sensory-driven” speech (the person appears to repeat details primarily for his or her benefit rather than sharing information for social interaction) Ability to organize and use language diminishes when responding to others in social situations, and when discussing emotions Some demonstrated use of nonverbal communication functions but inconsistent in the ability to interpret and use common cues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2: Requiring Substantial Support Moderate</td>
<td>Displays some drive to establish sensory-driven play or pursuit of interests but can be redirected by others During social play as a child and in social situations as an adult, tends to create and follow rigid and inflexible play or conversational routines Infrequent display of unusual body movements and mannerisms may be noted during times of stress or during solitary pursuit of interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language skills typically less developed than in individuals at Level 1 Use of language is prompt-dependent on adults May have developed one or more areas of passionate interest but has difficulty communicating details with others May initiate conversation but notable difficulties with reciprocal conversation inflexible and limited in ability to participate in an extended conversation Use of repetitive questions and phrases is commonly seen Use of nonverbal communication cues inconsistent and infrequent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3: Requiring Very Substantial Support Significant</td>
<td>Tends to focus intently on the sensory aspects of materials: Seeks out manipulative materials with visual and tactile features Creates repetitive sensory routines as a means to self-regulate anxiety Frequently displays distinctive unusual body movements and mannerisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May be functionally nonverbal Rarely uses nonverbal communication functions (eye gaze, gestures, joint attention) When verbal skills are present: Vocabulary is organized around labeling Use of language is rote and self-directed with frequent use of scripted language Comments rarely directed towards a listener Expressive language more developed than receptive language in everyday situations Receptive language most organized when verbal requests are paired with visual contextual cues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© 2013 Marilyn J. Monteiro, Ph.D. All rights reserved.
Students with Autism Spectrum Differences:

Are often three-dimensional, systematic, binary, and visual thinkers
- This brain style drives the creation of routines
- Contributes to the student’s inflexibility and rigid thinking

Benefit from extra time to process incoming language and are “careful thinkers”
- Processing information is hard work
- Oftentimes the student misses some of the content and context

Are sensory-driven instead of organized around social communication
- Have a relatively high threshold or drive for sensory input (preferred interests; routines)
- Sensory routines feel good and serve the function of helping the individual’s brain organize, regulate, and block out incoming sources of stress

Have a relatively low threshold for verbal and social input
- Verbal and social exchanges are hard work
- Even students who have a social drive struggle with managing the incoming input from their conversational and social partners

May have difficulty following the flow of the classroom
- Intense focus on areas of interest interfere with the student’s ability to shift from his or her sensory-driven agenda to the agenda of others
- Are often prompt-dependent on adults and predictable routines

Manage directions much better when adults “Talk less and show more”
- Even highly verbal students fatigue quickly when following verbal directions
- Passing the student’s threshold for incoming language and social demands can trigger agitation, anxiety, resistance, and escape behavior routines
The Visual Framework for Autism Spectrum Disorder
The Descriptive Triangle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1: Requiring Support</th>
<th>Level 2: Requiring Substantial Support</th>
<th>Level 3: Requiring Very Substantial Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mild but Significant</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Language and Communication

Differences in Brain Style

Sensory Use and Interests

Social Relationships and Emotional Responses

Marilyn J. Monteiro, Ph.D.
www.marilynmonteiro.com

© 2001; 2010; 2013; 2014 Marilyn J. Monteiro, Ph.D. All rights reserved.
The MIGDAS-2 Process

The Manual
- The manual describes the entire process in detail
- Sample cases are provided for the three levels of protocols for individuals across age and ability levels, including adults
- Rule-out sample cases are included to highlight the different patterns of observations seen in individuals with behavior patterns consistent with autism spectrum differences, and individuals who do not display patterns of behaviors consistent with autism spectrum differences

The Questionnaires
- The Parent/Caregiver Questionnaire provides the structure to conduct a conversational interview, resulting in a descriptive narrative
- The Teacher Questionnaire provides the structure for teachers to record descriptive details regarding the individual being evaluated

The Diagnostic Interview Protocols
- Three levels of protocols are available to address autism spectrum differences across age and ability levels:
  - Limited to No Verbal Fluency
  - Verbally Fluent
  - Adult
- Each protocol provides prompts, descriptive language contrasting behavior patterns consistent with autism spectrum differences with patterns not consistent with autism spectrum differences, and space to record specific behaviors displayed by the individual during the sensory-based diagnostic interview
- Each protocol has three sections, organized into the Descriptive Triangle
- Each page highlights a behavior category with contrasting descriptions of autism spectrum behavior patterns and patterns not consistent with those differences
- A summary page is provided to help the school psychologist summarize the pattern of observations
- The descriptive language provided in each protocol allows the evaluator to summarize the individual’s areas of strength and differences in a Behavioral Profile Summary that can be readily linked to individualized educational and intervention recommendations

© 2018 Marilyn J. Monteiro, Ph.D. All rights reserved.
The Parent/Caregiver and Teacher Questionnaires

MIGDAS-2 Parent/Caregiver Questionnaire

- The questionnaire booklet is designed for the school psychologist to either have a face-to-face conversation with the parent, or have the parent complete the booklet and have a follow-up conversation.
- Conversational prompts are organized to start with areas of present concern and include prompts for parents to discuss positive qualities and attributes.
- The questionnaire is designed to provide parents and caregivers with a structured way to provide their unique and singular narrative about their child.
- The autism spectrum narrative can be clearly identified as the narrative unfolds.
- Understand the power of storytelling when structuring the parent interview.
- Parents and caregivers need to tell their stories, and they respond to school psychologists and the evaluation process with a sense of trust and collaboration when they are provided with the opportunity to tell their stories and read their stories as part of the diagnostic summary report.
- The questionnaire provides an organized way to record and report stories that highlight the individual presentation of Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- As a school psychologist, you have a structured opportunity to establish a relationship of trust by listening and believing what you hear rather than explaining away autism spectrum differences when rating-scale data differ across raters and settings.
- Recognize that rating scales only tell part of the story, and that behaviors may be less pronounced in the school setting than in the home setting until the demands of the environment exceed the individual’s capacity to manage incoming demands.
1. Take your time and meet face-to-face
   - Think of the interview as a semi-structured conversation
   - Have the seating arrangement convey this
2. Understand the importance of storytelling
   - Parents need to tell their stories
   - We need to listen and accept what they tell us
3. Start with questions about the present
   - The present provides the natural entry point for this important conversation
4. Listen for themes and concerns
   - This gives you cues about the language you need to use when discussing the diagnosis in your next conversation
5. Include questions about positive attributes
   - Ask them to pick three words to describe their child
   - Learn about what they like the most about their child
6. Ask what the parents hope to gain from your evaluation
   - Convey that they are collaborative partners in this process
   - Listen to any concerns they raise about the school program
7. Find out what the parents have read or learned so far about autism spectrum disorders
   - This invites them to share their opinions, apprehensions, confusion
   - Helps establish trust with the evaluation team
8. Offer to explain the evaluation process involving their child
   - Emphasize the goal of getting to know their child’s worldview or way of thinking
   - Link that understanding with helping find practical ways to help their child develop the skills he or she needs
9. Understand the role of the nonfinite grief dynamic
   - The parent interview provides a place to process this complex set of emotions through sharing stories
   - Structuring the interview around storytelling and positive attributes addresses the grief dynamic in an indirect but powerful way
10. Give parents behavior checklists after the interview
    - Understand why it works best to give parents behavior checklists to complete after, rather than before, the parent interview

© 2014 Marilyn J. Monteiro, Ph.D. All rights reserved.
Discussing the Diagnosis with Parents
10 Key Elements in the Diagnostic Conversation
Marilyn J. Monteiro, Ph.D.

1. Consider delivering the diagnosis in an informal collaborative meeting
   - Think of this as the follow-up to your initial conversation
   - Parents need to hear this important information about their child without focusing on anything else
2. Start by sharing details or stories about their child
   - Set the tone for the conversation as being about their child as a unique individual
   - Remember: you are helping the parents build their story about their child
3. Express genuine appreciation and enjoyment of the child
   - Warmth and a positive tone signal your competence in delivering this difficult diagnosis
4. Use the descriptive triangle of differences to lay out behaviors and gain consensus on the diagnosis
   - The visual framework provides a focus point for parents and evaluators
   - Parents have something tangible to take with them at the end of the conversation
   - Know the knowledge level of the parents and gear your comments to that level
5. Avoid starting out by stating the child meets the criteria for a diagnosis
   - Remember to describe the child first and then link that description to a diagnosis
   - When the diagnosis comes first, the opportunity to establish a bond and to discuss the child in detail may be lost
6. Stop and listen
   - Ask periodically if what you are saying describes their child
   - Leave time in between your points to invite parents to share their thoughts and observations
7. Allow time for grieving
   - Anticipate that there will be a buildup of emotions throughout the conversation culminating in overt grief once the actual diagnosis is stated
   - Choose your words carefully but do say something to acknowledge the process
8. Anticipate questions about the child’s future development
   - Being able to ask the questions is part of the grief process
   - Asking questions is a sign of trust
9. Express appreciation for the opportunity to get to know their child
   - Parents appreciate knowing that you respect the unique nature of your relationship to them and their child
10. End with collaborative teaming
    - Leave the session with the parents with a consensus regarding the diagnosis
    - Link the child’s behavioral profile to a few practical and specific recommendations; tell them the next steps in the process

© 2014 Marilyn J. Monteiro, Ph.D. All rights reserved.
The Parent/Caregiver and Teacher Questionnaires

MIGDAS-2 Teacher Questionnaire

- The questionnaire booklet is designed to have the teacher keep the booklet for several days and fill out observations about the student in response to the questionnaire prompts over the course of several days.
- It can also be completed in a face-to-face interview.
- The questionnaire is designed to provide teachers with a structured way to provide their unique and singular narrative about the student.
- The questionnaire structures the teacher interview to maximize storytelling.
- The pattern of autism spectrum differences clearly emerges when teachers are asked to describe the student in daily situations.
- The teacher narrative provides the entry point to support the shift from the language of deficits to the language of differences, including areas of strength associated with autism spectrum brain style differences.
- Be prepared to counsel some teachers to articulate positive qualities about the student when they respond to the query to identify three qualities that best describe the student.
- Teachers need to tell their stories, and they respond to school psychologists and the evaluation process with a sense of trust and collaboration when they are provided with the opportunity to tell their stories and read their stories as part of the diagnostic summary report.
Sample Questions Excerpted from MIGDAS-2 Brody B. Case Study

Brody B. Age 8 years, 1 month

Concerns

1. Describe your major concerns about your child at the present time.
   - Doesn’t understand social rules and hasn’t made any real friends.
   - Worries about things a lot.
   - Has trouble paying attention and following directions.
   - Gets upset when things don’t go his way.

Activities and interests

5. What activities does your child like to spend the most time doing? Describe your child’s special skills or areas of particular interest in as much detail as possible.
   - Anything to do with space or weather
   - Has a collection of rocket and space shuttle models
   - Likes to tell us new facts
   - Reads almanacs
   - Watches the cartoon Jimmy Neutron
   - Uses the Internet because it is about a boy genius who loves science and makes inventions
   - Watches science programs

Sensory behaviors

6. Describe your child’s responses to sensory input and changes in his/her surroundings, including any preferences and aversions.

   Food

   What types of food does your child prefer?
   - Chips, chicken nuggets, but only one specific brand
What types of food does your child dislike?

Picky eater, no meat or fruit, smells his food before eating it

If your child is bothered by specific foods, have you noticed what is bothersome, for example, specific textures, food touching other food on the plate, or food mixed together?

Will not eat foods that are mixed together: takes sandwiches apart and eats each ingredient separately.

Does your child follow any dietary restrictions? Describe any specific changes in mood or behavior you’ve noticed since putting the dietary restrictions in place.

Trying to get him to eat a more balanced diet but he gets anxious and agitated when forced to try something new.

Refuses to eat new things after he smells them.

**Clothing**

Are there types of clothing your child prefers?

Prefers loose-fitting pants and shirts and has several preferred outfits.

At home, he likes to wear his NASA t-shirt or his homemade astronaut suit.

Is your child bothered by clothing, for example, tags, seams in socks, long sleeves, tight or loose clothing, or types of material?

Complains about tags and seams in his socks.
**Visual details**

Does your child seem to notice or comment on visual details that others do not pay attention to? Can you give an example?

- Notices things in the background and scans the room to find objects that are of scientific interest.

How does your child react to changes in visual details, for example, if something is moved or rearranged in his/her room or elsewhere?

- Gets very upset when his brother touches his model rockets and other things.
- Got upset when we changed the couch in the family room.

**Emotions – anger/frustration**

7. Describe how your child manages anger and frustration.

What situations trigger anger or agitation in your child?

- Gets frustrated when his brother teases him or touches his things. Homework projects that involve writing frustrate him, and he cries when he doesn’t want to finish his homework and we make him do it anyway. Gets upset when Tyler has friends over and they want to play on their own. Anytime something new or unexpected comes up. Doesn’t handle change very well.

How does your child express anger or agitation?

- Balls up his fists, shakes his head and yells.
- Says things like “This rocket’s about to blow!”
- Not aggressive towards others.
- Once he gets upset, it takes him awhile to calm down, and then he doesn’t want to talk about it.

What helps your child to calm down when angered or agitated?

- Leaving him alone helps, but usually he has to go through a whole cycle before he calms down again.
- Sometimes he follows us around and argues.


**School experience**

11. Describe your child’s school experience. What interventions or supports have worked well? What changes would you like to see put into place for your child?

*Past experience*

His teacher last year didn’t seem to understand Brody or try to help him. It seemed like she was blaming us. Once we pushed for the evaluation, things got better.

*Current*

We are very happy with his teacher this year. She understands him and helps him as much as she can. We can see that she genuinely likes him and “gets” him.

We would like to see additional supports put into place to help Brody feel successful and to help him form some true friendships.

**Three words/qualities to describe child**

15. What three words or qualities would best describe your child?

*Good natured but serious*

*Intelligent*

*Enthusiastic about his interests*

**Closing questions**

16. Is there anything else you would like us to know about your child?

17. What do you hope to gain from this evaluation?

Brody has started saying that his brain isn’t working right when he has trouble completing his homework. We are worried about his self-esteem. We hope this evaluation leads to everyone involved in his life to have a better understanding of him. We want to learn ways to help him become less frustrated and to play better with his peers.
Parent Interview

As part of this evaluation process, Mrs. B. completed a detailed parent interview with this evaluation team in addition to completing several behavior rating scales. The MIGDAS-2 Parent/Caregiver Questionnaire was used to structure the interview process.

- When asked to describe her main concerns regarding Brody, Mrs. B. stated that Brody is

- When asked to talk about family life and Brody’s relationships with family members, Mrs. B. stated that Brody

- When asked to describe the activities Brody enjoys, Mrs. B. noted that Brody loves to

- When asked to discuss Brody’s sensory preferences and sensitivities, Mrs. B. noted that Brody

- When asked to talk about Brody’s early development, Mrs. B. stated that he met his milestones on time but

- When asked to describe Brody’s patterns of expressing anger and agitation, Mrs. B. stated that Brody

- When asked if she had read much about autism spectrum differences, Mrs. B. noted that since her son was quite young she has wondered if he might not have autism spectrum developmental differences.

- When asked to pick three words to describe Brody, his mother stated that he is

- When asked to discuss additional school supports she would like to see put into place for Brody, Mrs. B. noted that Brody
MIGDAS-2 Diagnostic Interview Process
Ten Tips for School Psychologists
Marilyn J. Monteiro, Ph.D.

1. Follow the 3-step flow:
   - Sensory materials and topics
   - Social relationships and emotions
   - Physical movement

2. Remember the goals of the interview:
   - Experience sharing
   - Taking the perspective of the child

3. Familiarize yourself with the child’s areas of interest

4. Decide which sensory materials are appropriate to use; probe for the sensory entry point to establish the shared conversation

5. Start out by following the child’s lead in terms of level of talking (limit verbal input with children who are not verbally fluent) and focus on objects or topics of interest

6. Ask comparison questions and make factual statements; mirror the child

7. Let things go in an unexpected direction with the child as your guide

8. Include comments and social probes

9. Prompt the child to ask you a question at the end of the session

10. Consider completing the sensory-based MIGDAS-2 interview prior to administration of the ADOS-2, as the sensory-based conversation alerts and engages the individual and provides information about the degree and type of input that organizes and regulates the individual; the ADOS-2 modules provide information about the individual’s responsiveness to examiner-driven prompts and allow for scoring of the algorithm and the resulting autism comparison score
Categories of Sensory Materials and How to Use Them

1. **Visual cause-and-effect materials**
   - Handheld water games
   - Light-up toys with buttons and switches

2. **Noisemakers**
   - Thunder tube
   - Squawk tubes
   - Cartoon sound machine

3. **Science materials**
   - Ball of Whacks and other magnet puzzles
   - GeoFlux

4. **Tactile objects**
   - Sensory stress balls
   - Hoberman Mini Sphere

5. **Artwork**
   - Acquired before or during the interview

6. **Playing catch**
   - Switch Pitch
   - Velcro ball and mitt
Suggested Sensory Materials and Fidget Items
Available at Amazon

- Meteor Storm LED Changing Pattern Spinner Wand
- Thunder Tube
- Sound Machine Cartoon Special Sound Effects
- Caterpillar Wind-Up
- Dinosaur Wind-Up
- Flipping Frog Wind-Up
- ToySmith Flip N Spin Ladybug
- Roger Von Oech’s X-Ball
- Roger Von Oech’s Star Ball
- Ball of Whacks
- Tomy Waterfuls Underwater Adventure Ring Toss
- Melissa and Doug Magnetic Fishing Game
- Melissa and Doug Magnetic Towing Game
- Melissa and Doug Easy Grip Shapes Puzzle
- Waterfall Tube
- Assorted sensory stress balls
- Robot Arm
- Dealing with Feelings cards
MIGDAS™-2

Marilyn J. Monteiro, PhD  Sheri Stegall, PhD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child’s name/ID number:</th>
<th>Brody B.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date of birth:</td>
<td>Age:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 years, 1 month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School:</td>
<td>Grade:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date completed:

Evaluator(s):
Instructions

Description of this evaluation protocol:
- This MIGDAS-2 protocol is for use with verbally fluent children and adolescents.
- The term child is used throughout the protocol to refer to the child or adolescent being interviewed.

The Diagnostic Interview is organized into three sections to facilitate a sensory-based interview with the child:
- **Sensory Use and Interests**
- **Language and Communication**
- **Social Relationships and Emotional Responses**

Each section highlights specific features designed to help you elicit a unique sample of the child’s behavioral profile, as well as share and document the child’s areas of interest and perspective. Each feature includes Prompts, Observations, and Notes:

**Prompts**
- Help you structure the interview.

**Observations**
- Direct your attention to important aspects of the child’s behavior and responses to the materials and topics. Although the primary focus is on the child’s interaction with you (the evaluator), be sure to also observe the child’s interactions with others who may be present during the interview, such as a parent or another team member.
- Help facilitate a team discussion (when applicable) and help you write a detailed review of the child’s behavioral profile following the interview session.

**Notes**
- Provide space to record your specific observations of the child’s behavior in response to the materials and topics.

Discussion and summary:
- Either during the interview or immediately afterward, record your observations of the child’s behavior in the space provided.
- After the interview, use the Behavioral Profile Summary (located at the end of this booklet) to summarize the key features of the child’s unique behavioral profile. Be sure to consider all sources of data prior to making a diagnostic determination.

Preparation/Materials needed:
- Age-appropriate sensory materials (visual, movement, auditory, tactile; to begin the interview, place one or two sensory toys or objects that produce visual and movement effects on the table in front of where you will direct the child to sit)
- Ball (for game of catch)
- Facts and items (objects, pictures, books) to be used as visual prompts related to the child’s areas of preferred interest
- Compact mirror (for younger children)
- Feelings cards
### Sensory Use and Interests

#### 1. Response to materials that have visual and movement properties

**Prompts:**
To begin the interview, place one or two sensory toys or objects that produce visual and movement effects on the table in front of where you will direct the child to sit. Limit your talking until the child has had time to explore the materials and/or until the child begins to speak.

**Observations:**
How does the child respond to the materials?

| Intensely focused and repetitive: may place face close to visual objects or otherwise display close visual inspection | Preference for novelty; interested in a range of materials |
| Comments on, points to, or gestures toward the objects, without the corresponding behaviors that are required to establish shared attention with the evaluator (eye gaze; changes in facial expressions directed toward the evaluator) | Comments on, points to, or gestures toward the objects as a means of establishing shared attention with the evaluator; directs eye gaze and smiling toward the evaluator |
| Displays pronounced difficulty expanding focus beyond the objects to include joint referencing and interaction with the evaluator; may explore materials with his or her back turned toward the evaluator | Includes the evaluator in the exploration of the objects through a shared routine and social referencing |
| Pairs intense body movements and mannerisms with repeated manipulation of the object; may be brief in duration but repetitive | Does not display unusual or intense repetitive body movements or mannerisms while manipulating the objects |
| Hesitant to touch or explore the materials; shows a preference for talking but may engage with the materials when the evaluator models exploring the objects | May display brief hesitancy but quickly engages with the materials when provided with social prompts and encouragement |

**Notes:**

**Visual, tactile, and auditory sensory-seeking behaviors with the materials.**

Used sensory balls to create a solar system and made a space shuttle out of the magnets.

Back to Evaluator (Ev.) while closely focusing on constructing space-related routines with the materials.
5. Body movements and mannerisms

Prompts:
Pay attention to the child’s repetitive behaviors (which may be subtle). Include observations made while walking to and from the interview room and while playing catch.

Observations:
How does the child use his or her body?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engages in repetitive sensory-based behaviors, such as (but not limited to) the following:</th>
<th>Uses body movements and mannerisms that are a natural extension of the situation and activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Hand or <strong>body tensing</strong>&lt;br&gt; ▪ Body rocking&lt;br&gt; ▪ Sustains a static posture of hands, arms, or body&lt;br&gt; ▪ Waves arms or flaps hands&lt;br&gt; ▪ Displays facial grimaces or other facial contractions&lt;br&gt; ▪ Perches on the chair or displays other unusual seated posture&lt;br&gt; ▪ <strong>Paces the room</strong>&lt;br&gt; ▪ Stands for the duration of the session&lt;br&gt; ▪ <strong>Crawls</strong> under the table or on the floor</td>
<td>▪ Repeatedly places fingers to lips or face&lt;br&gt; ▪ <strong>Presses objects to lips or face</strong>&lt;br&gt; ▪ <strong>Smells objects</strong>&lt;br&gt; ▪ Visually inspects objects by placing face close to the objects, or examines them from a visual angle&lt;br&gt; ▪ <strong>Vocalizes in a self-directed way</strong>&lt;br&gt; ▪ <strong>Licks or bites objects</strong>&lt;br&gt; ▪ Repeatedly moves into the evaluator’s personal space</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Walks with an unusual gait (bouncing on the balls of his or her feet; extending torso ahead of lower body)</th>
<th>Engages in a range of fluid body movements and mannerisms throughout the session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Hurries down the hallway</strong></th>
<th>Walks in stride with others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>During the game of catch, displays difficulty navigating the routine as evidenced by the following:</th>
<th>During the game of catch:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Struggles to organize the sequence of throwing and catching&lt;br&gt; ▪ Maintains a static stance&lt;br&gt; ▪ Responds to approaching ball with an involuntary reflexive tactile defensiveness&lt;br&gt; ▪ Throws ball with excessive force&lt;br&gt; ▪ Becomes preoccupied with the properties of the ball, commenting on the properties while ignoring the evaluator&lt;br&gt; ▪ Prompt-dependent on the evaluator to maintain participation in the catch exchange&lt;br&gt; ▪ Returns quickly to sit in chair or otherwise abandons the game</td>
<td>▪ Navigates the use of a Velcro ball and mitt, or other ball&lt;br&gt; ▪ Varies stance and routine&lt;br&gt; ▪ Spontaneously expands the game to include other players&lt;br&gt; ▪ Uses and responds to cues regarding the conclusion of the game</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

Jerky body movements, crawled on floor, talked to himself. Had trouble negotiating the ball and mitt and tried to throw the ball while still attached to the mitt.
Notes:

From page 7 - Body Movements and Mannerisms

No variation in the game or reaction when Ev. enthused: “Bullseye!”

Alternated a neutral expression with exaggerated facial grimace.

Redirected the game to use the ball as Eris, the largest dwarf planet in his solar system setup.

From page 10 - Content of Preferred Topics

the Ev. named a character from Jimmy Neutron, B. recounted a large section of his favorite episode, assuming voices and mannerisms for each character. Looked at Ev. the most during this exchange; stood in her personal space. Touched and manipulated sensory balls and magnets while speaking throughout the session. Tapped his temple repeatedly while he said “Think, think, think” each time he responded to questions.
### Language and Communication

#### 1. Intonation and inflection

**Prompts:**
- Listen carefully to the child's intonation, inflection, cadence, and voice volume.
- Reflect a subtle version of the child's style as you speak.
- Match the child's voice volume and intensity.
- Periodically interrupt the child's narrative flow by asking questions or making comments when the child is speaking.

**Observations:**
How does the child's speech style vary throughout the session?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaks with an unusual cadence that is distinctive and unvarying throughout the session:</th>
<th>Varies his or her cadence to match the flow and content of the conversation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Lilting&lt;br&gt; - Exclamatory&lt;br&gt; - High-pitched&lt;br&gt; - Nasal&lt;br&gt; - Stilted&lt;br&gt; - Monotone&lt;br&gt; - Exaggerated or overemphasized&lt;br&gt; - Halting flow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaks in a formal or scripted style</th>
<th>Speaks in a style consistent with range displayed by typically developing peers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does not modulate voice volume to fit the conversation (consistently loud or soft spoken)</th>
<th>Modulates voice volume as a natural part of the conversation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responds to interruptions by increasing voice volume in a pronounced way</th>
<th>Responds to interruptions without increasing voice volume</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distinctive differences in speech patterns become more pronounced as the session progresses</th>
<th>Intonation, inflection, cadence, and voice volume remain consistent throughout the session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Notes:**

- Nasal, monotone quality to his speech.
- Formal sound to his statements.
- Lots of hesitation when answering questions and shifting from his preferred topics to social questions.
- Overrode Ev.'s comments throughout the interview by speaking louder.
- Enunciated each word in an exaggerated way.
- Exclamatory quality when he was making his point and stating facts.
## 2. Content of preferred topics

**Prompts:**
Engage the child in a range of conversational topics, including one or more of the child’s preferred topics of interest.

**Observations:**
How does the child’s language use vary when describing preferred topics?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaks in a narrative that has a sensory, self-directed quality (focused on details of his or her narrative to the exclusion of the participation of the evaluator)</th>
<th>Conversation focuses on conveying information to the evaluator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repetitively manipulates one or more of the sensory items throughout the conversation</td>
<td>Acknowledges evaluator by responding with joint attention comments, eye contact, head nods, or other social communication gestures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maintains focus on preferred topics</th>
<th>Discusses a variety of topics; engages in a reciprocal exchange of information with the evaluator regarding the topic of discussion and displays equal interest and engagement in the conversation regardless of the topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses recurring phrases (e.g., “well, actually”) to regain control of the conversation and direct it back to a preferred topic</td>
<td>Questions and/or declarative statements are used within the context of a fluent narrative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asks questions and/or makes declarative statements but does not use a fluent narrative</th>
<th>Moves with ease from one topic to the next without interrupting the evaluator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repeatedly interrupts and overrides comments made by the evaluator</td>
<td>Does not repeatedly correct the evaluator’s comments and statements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repeatedly “corrects” the evaluator’s comments and statements</th>
<th>Uses a similar level of vocabulary and detail when discussing a range of topics; does not use distinctively unusual phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses unusual phrases; may be paired with advanced vocabulary</td>
<td>Quality of narrative is consistent with the level of detail and flow of information expected for typically developing peers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Displays a rote, rehearsed, or scripted quality in his or her narrative</th>
<th>Emphasizes both social and factual aspects of the topics discussed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Displays either an excessive quantity of speech or a notably greater quantity of speech when relaying details about the preferred topic</td>
<td>Displays the same amount of speech when discussing a range of topics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Makes assumptions that the evaluator already has a frame of reference regarding the preferred topic | Indicates an awareness of the unusual nature of the conversation by making comments or asking joint attention questions about the evaluator’s knowledge of the topic under discussion |

**Notes:**
“Are you familiar with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, otherwise known as NASA?” “The space shuttle is the most complex machine ever built.” “There’s only one slight problem with the landings: weather.” Consistently used Ev.’s comments to cite facts and information (“Actually, the website www.weatherunderground.com has the best information about approaching storms, not www.weather.com”). When
### Social Relationships and Emotional Responses

#### 1. Eye contact and eye gaze

**Prompts:**

Use eye contact when you speak to and listen to the child.  
When the child establishes eye contact, maintain eye contact.  
Pair the use of eye contact with an appropriate range of facial expressions.

**Observations:**

How does the child use eye contact and eye gaze?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shows the following differences in the use of eye contact and eye gaze during the session:</th>
<th>Uses eye contact and eye gaze as an integral part of the conversation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Consistently avoids eye contact</td>
<td>▪ Engages the listeners with eye contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Uses sporadic, fleeting eye contact</td>
<td>▪ Shifts eye gaze to each speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Looks in the direction of the listener without establishing eye contact</td>
<td>▪ Shifts eye gaze to each listener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Sustains eye gaze with a quality of focusing on the contents of his or her own statements rather than on the listener</td>
<td>▪ Eye contact has a quality of anticipation in waiting for evaluator prompts while maintaining a sense of a shared exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Uses eye contact mostly when speaking, rarely when listening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Directs eye gaze to the primary evaluator even when the speaker is another evaluator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eye gaze is not integrated with a range of facial expressions</th>
<th>Eye gaze is integrated with a range of facial expressions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eye gaze is used to examine visual properties of objects through close visual inspection or peripheral eye gaze with a high degree of focused intensity</th>
<th>Eye gaze is used to examine visual properties of objects without focused intensity or unusual close visual inspection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The proportion of time the child uses eye gaze to examine visual details of objects exceeds the time spent engaged in eye contact with the evaluator</th>
<th>The proportion of time the child uses eye gaze to explore the visual properties of objects is equal to or less than the time spent engaged in eye contact with the evaluator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

- Looked at Ev. only when speaking and had a quality of staring through her while lecturing with facts and details.
- No response to facial expressions even when exaggerated.
- Fleeting eye gaze unless speaking at length delivering details about preferred topic.
3. Perception of self in relation to others

Prompts:
Ask the child questions about his or her peers (friends, classmates) and family. Toward the end of the session, prompt the child to think of a question to ask you. Note whether the question shows an understanding of perspective-taking regarding the interview session and the role of the evaluator(s).

Observations:
How does the child respond when prompted to discuss peers and family, and when requested to ask a question of you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibits difficulty engaging in a conversation about peers and family, in one or more of the following ways:</th>
<th>Spontaneously offers information about peers and family and answers questions with ease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Requires repeated prompts to engage in the conversational exchange or does not engage despite repeated prompts</td>
<td>Describes shared activities with preferred peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays agitation during the conversation</td>
<td>Names specific individuals and includes distinguishing characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides brief statements without expanding on details</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May describe sharing his or her preferred activity with a peer but emphasizes the activity rather than the relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has difficulty naming specific friends, or names specific individuals but is unable to describe distinguishing characteristics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names a younger child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names a peer but omits classmates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names classmates using first and last names</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names a friend not seen in over a year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names a sibling only, omitting peers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked if he or she has any questions for the evaluator:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Says “no”</th>
<th>Asks a question that acknowledges the evaluator as an adult and reflects an understanding of shared social questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Struggles to formulate a question to ask the evaluator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks a question that does not have a shared social focus (e.g., asks a question related to his or her preferred topic)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks a question in a rote or scripted way</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes a declarative statement instead of asking a question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
- Said he plays space shuttle with Paul from his class on the playground.
- Named his brother (“He’s annoying when he touches my things!!!”)
- “And that’s about all I have to say about friends.”
- Took time and several prompts to formulate a question; referenced the ball he was holding. Question: “Do you know how this ball works? When you press the sides together, the suction cup makes it stick and then randomly pop up!”
6. Feelings and description of wishes, self, and ways to make school a better place

Prompts:
Structure a discussion of feelings and self-awareness.
Ask about times when the child has experienced various feelings, or use feelings cards as a visual prompt to talk about feelings.
Ask the child to describe three things he or she would wish for, to use three words to describe him- or herself, and to tell three things he or she would change about the school to make it a better place for him or her.
For younger children, use concrete objects or visual prompts to help organize responses. For example, use a glitter wand that the child can hold while responding to the three wishes prompt. You can also hold up a finger or list the numbers 1–3 on a sheet of paper to prompt responses for each fact about self and changes for school.

Observations:
How much self-awareness does the child display in discussing a range of feelings?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responds in any of the following ways during the discussion of feelings / feelings cards activity:</th>
<th>During the discussion of feelings / feelings cards activity, the child spontaneously recounts examples of a time he or she experienced each feeling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Displays a rote understanding of each feeling but is unable to provide a personalized example</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responds by reading the definition on each card</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closely examines the visual details before responding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increases repetitive manipulation of preferred sensory object</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responds to each card with a variation on the same topic (same person or event)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requires a specific prompt from the evaluator to organize a response (“I feel happy when...”)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notable challenges in organizing, retrieving, and using language when discussing feelings:</th>
<th>Shows the same ability to organize, retrieve, and use language when discussing feelings as when discussing other topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delayed response time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starts and stops sentences multiple times</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeats the evaluator’s question or prompt in the exact way the evaluator has spoken</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses the same phrase in response to each query and requires prompting to provide a relevant response</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May not be able to expand responses beyond the brief, repetitive response even when prompted to do so by the evaluator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays increased agitation level along with decreased communication skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requires specific prompts to generate three words to describe self or three wishes, or is unable to generate the three words or wishes even with prompts</th>
<th>Generates three words or qualities to describe self and three wishes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Words to describe self are generic</td>
<td>Words to describe self are specific and informative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wishes are concrete and reflect objects in the room</td>
<td>Wishes reflect responses expected for typically developing peers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*see page 22*
Feelings

Happy  When I get to go to NASA
Proud  To be an astronaut
Love   Space!
Sad    When my fish died
Angry  When Tyler touches my things
Scared When there is a tornado in the immediate area
Safe   In my room
Lonely Hmm...not really
Nervous I already told you—when there's a tornado approaching!
Belonging With my family
Embarrassed Hmm...not really
Relaxed In my room

Three wishes

1. Be a NASA astronaut
2. Go on a shuttle mission
3. Keep Pluto as a planet

Three words to describe self

1. I already told you—astronaut!
2. Scientist
3. That's enough

Three things to change to make school a better place

1. Hmm...more science
2. More time to play space shuttle at recess
3. That's enough
Notes:

From page 20 - Feelings and Description of Wishes...

Read the definition on each card before responding. Squeezed a sensory ball during this activity in a repetitive way, pressing it to his lips from time to time. Most of his responses involved space and weather. Was unable to elaborate or extend his responses.
## Pattern of Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensory Use and Interests</th>
<th>Consistent with ASD</th>
<th>Not consistent with ASD</th>
<th>Unclear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Response to materials that have visual and movement properties</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Response to materials that have auditory properties</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Response to materials that have tactile properties</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Response to introduction of preferred topics</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Body movements and mannerisms</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall for this section</strong></td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language and Communication</th>
<th>Consistent with ASD</th>
<th>Not consistent with ASD</th>
<th>Unclear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Intonation and inflection</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Content of preferred topics</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Quality, clarity, and relevance of speech</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reciprocity</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Idioms and colloquial expressions</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Jokes and riddles</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall for this section</strong></td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Relationships and Emotional Responses</th>
<th>Consistent with ASD</th>
<th>Not consistent with ASD</th>
<th>Unclear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Eye contact and eye gaze</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Facial expressions and overall quality of emotional responses</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Perception of self in relation to others</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Anxiety or agitation level</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Self-awareness of anger and agitation triggers</td>
<td></td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Feelings and description of wishes, self, and ways to make school a better place</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall for this section</strong></td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall pattern (all sections)</th>
<th>Consistent with ASD</th>
<th>Not consistent with ASD</th>
<th>Unclear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Behavioral Profile Summary

**Sensory Use and Interests**

**Strengths:**
- Visual and three-dimensional thinker.
- Has age-appropriate academic skills and excels in the areas of science and math.
- Has developed several age-appropriate skills and interests (reading, science and space, weather).
- Attends to visual details and retains information well when encoded visually.
- Self-regulates by engaging in solitary activities (reading, building rockets, following weather patterns).

**Differences:**
- Captured by his thoughts and topics of interest.
- Displays some sensory sensitivities.
- Transition times are unsettling for him.
- Flexibility can be challenging when he is required to switch from his agenda to the agenda of others.
Language and Communication

Strengths:
- Highly verbal
- Logical thinker
- Learns and retains facts about areas of interest (space, weather).
- Enjoys talking to others about his areas of interest.

Differences:
- Low threshold for conversations that are initiated by others and do not involve his areas of preferred interest.
- Prompt-dependent on adults to keep a conversation going outside of his special interests.
- Challenging to talk with same-age peers about social topics.
- Harder to organize and use language when the conversation does not involve his areas of interest.
- Initiates conversations but has difficulty with reciprocity, extension, and flexibility.
- Has not yet developed a nuanced understanding of his worldview or the vocabulary to self-advocate.
Social Relationships and Emotional Responses

Strengths:
- Congenial demeanor
- Connected with family members
- Genuinely enjoys sharing his preferred interests with others.
- Has a developing vocabulary to discuss emotions.

Differences:
- Awkward around people, especially during unstructured social times.
- Struggles to use and interpret conversational cues (eye contact, tone of voice, joint attention, reciprocity, flexibility).
- Has difficulty understanding the perspective of others.
- Has not yet developed self-advocacy tools to manage successfully when he becomes anxious or agitated.

Diagnostic Impressions

Autism spectrum disorder
Level 1 – Requires support
Monica, Age 5
Brain Style Profile

Language and Communication

Strengths
- Beginning to use words
- Developing an ever-increasing vocabulary for labeling what she sees
- Learns new words best within the structure of predictable routines (“showing” while “telling”)
- Responds best to spoken language when words are paired with predictable visual contextual cues (car keys and verbal prompts to go out; pajamas and bedtime)
- Directs the adult’s hand to the specific object she wants
- Calms and is responsive when her mother anticipates her needs

Differences
- Prefers to get things without help from others
- Uses her mother’s hand as a tool to get what she needs if no other option exists
- Low threshold for incoming language; pulls away from verbal language
- Becomes reactive and disorganized with verbal language demands
- Predictable routines help her anticipate and attach meaning to language
- Pairing limited language with visual contextual cues helps her organize, retrieve, and use language

Strategies and supports to foster language and communication:
Max, Age 9
Brain Style Profile

Social Relationships and Emotions

Strengths

- Has a close and warm relationship with his parents and his teachers
- Has a desire for friendships with peers
- Cares deeply about others and is happiest when things are going well for himself and others around him
- Has a strong sense of justice and likes to know and follow rules

Differences

- Often misses social cues
- Has difficulty recognizing and following the back-and-forth process involved in social exchanges with others (especially with same-age peers)
- Loses his ability to use his language when emotionally agitated
- Once he becomes upset he becomes inflexible in his thinking and behavior
- Once he becomes upset it can be challenging for him to calm down and regroup

Strategies and supports to foster social relationships:

Strategies and supports to foster emotional development:
Mitchell, Age 13
Brain Style Profile

Sensory Use and Interests

Strengths
- Highly developed ability to focus on his areas of interest; enjoys researching and learning extensive information about his areas of preferred interest
- Has developed age-appropriate interests (Minecraft, science facts related to astronomy and weather)
- Visual learner (seeks out visual patterns and routines)
- Three-dimensional thinker

Differences
- Difficulty shifting his focus from his areas of interest to the agenda of others
- Highly attentive to visual details
- Transitions from his areas of interest are frequently a source of agitation and distress
- Challenging to organize materials, initiate and complete tasks
- Difficulty managing multiple sources of stimulation (language use significantly decreases and agitation level increases)
- Seeks out deep pressure, physical movement and visual details to self-regulate
- Sensory triggers include unexpected sounds, and changes in established routines
- Engages in unusual body movements and mannerisms, including pacing, body tensing, facial grimacing, close visual inspection of high-interest materials, and picking at skin

Strategies and supports to help with sensory regulation:
The Autism Spectrum
Understanding and Supporting Students Across Age and Ability Levels
Marilyn J. Monteiro, Ph.D.

Meredith, Age 15
Brain Style Profile

Language and Communication

Strengths
- Enjoys talking about her interests with others
- Is learning how to tell facts so that others understand her stories
- Enjoys talking with friends
- Learning how to follow communication rules

Differences
- Hard to follow topics started by others
- Hard to understand the meaning of what others are talking about
- Confused about the topics introduced by others and responds by switching back to her topic; her topics often focus on reporting events from the past
- Difficult for Meredith to pause her thoughts and narrative to process what others are saying
- Puts familiar scripted phrases into her conversation and repeats these often (“Some people are worth melting for”)
- Has not yet developed a way to notice and communicate when she is confused about conversational topics raised by others (does not notice or tell others when she does not understand the question or when she is becoming confused)
- Use of scripted language increases when agitated or upset
- Organizes her understanding of incoming language best when visual prompts are provided (lists, social scripts, phrases to say)

Strategies:
Autism Evaluations
Best Practice Methods for School Evaluation Specialists
Marilyn J. Monteiro, Ph.D.

Best Practice Autism Evaluation Quick Reference

- Make sure your evaluations are focused on obtaining the behavioral sample and profile of the individual student
- Remember: singular presentation of a global disorder
- This means expanding the scope of your diagnostic tools beyond the ADOS-2...
- And using an organizing framework to highlight areas of strength and differences (The Descriptive Triangle)
- Are you routinely:
  - Completing a detailed parent interview and carefully considering parent report?
  - Using a range of best practice behavior rating scales, including the CARS2, ASRS, SRS-2, BASC-3, PLSI, CCC-2, TTAP?
  - Including a behavior sample using less structured prompts while providing sensory materials and/or preferred interests at the start or end of your evaluation session?
  - For students who are at an ADOS-2 Module 3 level, do you routinely include or use the MIGDAS-2 Diagnostic Verbally Fluent Interview Protocol to gain the necessary language to describe the individual presentation of autism spectrum differences?
  - Holding off on your diagnostic conclusions until after you’ve completed a thorough and systematic discussion and organization of the student’s behavioral profile, taking all sources of data into account?
Students with autism spectrum brain style differences benefit from specific, systematic interventions to help them in the areas of organization and regulation of their behavior. They also benefit from the development of their individualized social skills and self-determination narrative.

- In the area of organization, students with autism spectrum brain style differences benefit from the following:
  - Visual schedules linked to his or her interests (Pokemon, Minecraft, dinosaurs, trains, cars, animals, marine life)
  - Talk less, and show while telling using visual supports (schedule, “first/then” cards, job cards, T-chart for words and actions)
  - Organizational notebook with systematic adult coaching to master routine of using it throughout the day to help him or her manage his or her materials and behavior during transition times
  - Work organized with visual step-by-step maps
  - Use of a visually structured work system (study carrel or desk, start and finish areas, checklist of tasks, penny/token visual chart to signal “how much” work)
  - Adjust work demands into short, rapid cycles of work/break/work/break to build the student’s stamina for sustained work and to minimize disruptive behavior episodes triggered by surpassing his or her threshold for incoming demands
  - Provide alternative ways to show mastery of academic content to written work
  - Add your ideas here:
Students with autism spectrum brain style differences benefit from specific, systematic interventions to help them in the areas of organization and regulation of their behavior. They also benefit from the development of their individualized social skills and self-determination narrative.

- In the area of regulation, students benefit from the following:
  - Self-regulation scale developed using a metaphor of interest to the student (weather, timeline, battery) that is linked to words, actions, feelings, and strategies to self-regulate and to increase the student’s awareness of and ability to regulate his or her reactivity.
  - Frequent prompts throughout the day to rate: “How am I doing?” using the regulation scale.
  - Systematic sensory regrouping breaks planned into his or her day in a proactive way.
  - “Words and actions” T-chart to identify and build adaptive replacement behavior routines.
  - Introduce the concept of “train my brain” to teach adaptive coping skills routines.
  - Add your ideas here.
Students with autism spectrum brain style differences benefit from specific, systematic interventions to help them in the areas of organization and regulation of their behavior. They also benefit from the development of their individualized social skills and self-determination narrative.

- In the area of social skills and self-determination narrative, students benefit from the following:
  - Develop a notebook about the student that contains all of his or her tools
  - Include the student’s personal narrative in the notebook, built incrementally over time, with the student’s Brain Style Profile, narrative about him- or herself and life, skills, talents, and goals
  - Use social scripts, comic strip conversations, video modeling and guided practice to support the student’s development of social skills with peers
  - Provide planned, systematic opportunities to practice targeted social skills
  - Consider reverse inclusion with peer role models
  - Add your ideas here:
Autism Evaluations
Methods and Differential Diagnosis Issues
Marilyn J. Monteiro, Ph.D.

Differential Diagnosis Issues

Autism Spectrum Disorder or....

- Intellectual Disabilities / Global Developmental Delays?
  - Frequently co-morbid with more significant presentation of autism symptoms
  - Global developmental delays versus Uneven patterns of development
  - Listen carefully to parent report of the child’s behaviors
  - Social drive to exploration of the world
  - Sensory exploration is tied to developmental level

- In the evaluation setting:
  - Gain information about the child’s social communication skills and sensory interests in the absence of adult prompts
  - Practice your skills in providing the child with sensory materials while minimizing social communication cues

- Specific behaviors you are looking for when ASD and ID/GDD are present:
  - Limited social initiation (eye contact, gestures, change in facial expressions, shared enjoyment)
  - Limited to no response to the evaluator’s responses when the child initiates (handing an object without follow-through)
  - More time and interest (as measured by eye gaze and focus) spent on materials with sensory properties than on social engagement with the evaluators

© 2018 Marilyn J. Monteiro, Ph.D. All rights reserved.
Differential Diagnosis Issues

Autism Spectrum Disorder or Emotional/Behavioral Disorder?

- Behaviors seen in children with emotional/behavioral disorders overlap with those seen in children with ASD without accompanying ID.
- Emotional regulation challenges and the corresponding behaviors can mask underlying neurodevelopmental differences.
- Students with emotional regulation challenges are almost always initially referred to determine whether they meet the eligibility of emotional disturbance.
- Mood disorders can occur co-morbidly with ASD. A family history and diagnosis of a mood disorder does not necessarily rule out the presence of an underlying ASD. A trauma history does not necessarily rule out underlying ASD differences.

- Take a detailed history as part of the parent interview:
  - Interests
  - Preferences for time alone
  - Quality and quantity of social contacts with peers
  - Triggers for emotional dysregulation
  - Settings in which emotional dysregulation is most likely to occur

- Suspend your hypothesis or “story” about the cause of the behavior.

- Clues that you are bound by your predetermined hypothesis include:
  - Statements about the family
  - “That’s because...”
  - “He can do it when he wants to...”
  - “That’s oppositional behavior...”
Autism Evaluations
Methods and Differential Diagnosis Issues
Marilyn J. Monteiro, Ph.D.

Differential Diagnosis Issues

Autism Spectrum Disorder and/or Emotional/Behavioral Disorder?
- Learn to translate negative labels into a descriptive understanding of the student’s underlying deficits:
  - Could it be the student is attempting to control his or her environment to manage the stress of incoming language and social demands?
  - What type of setting does the child escape from when he or she engages in disruptive behaviors? (writing tasks, high-load language tasks, high-load social settings, high stimulation settings)
  - Is there a link between the student’s threshold for sensory input (incoming language, social, and transition demands) and the disruptive behavior?
  - Can you effectively describe the environment from the perspective of the student?

Autism Spectrum Disorder and/or Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder?
- ADHD is considered to be co-morbid with ASD 30% of the time
- DSM-5 allows for co-morbidity of the two diagnoses
- Locus of focus
  - Difficulty screening out information versus Scanning the environment for objects that fit in the child’s internal autism-driven agenda for self-regulation purposes
- Social drive
  - Both conditions include students who initiate social interaction
  - ADHD without ASD includes shared social enjoyment, reciprocity, and extension
  - Students with ASD initiate in the same way, over and over, with little follow-through
  - In the absence of familiar prompts or routines, students with ASD show a marked absence of shared social enjoyment, reciprocity, and extension
  - The rigid and inflexible pattern of initiation becomes more pronounced
Understand the Value of Narrative Report Writing

- Guides the reader to a functional understanding of the child’s behavioral differences...
  - The child’s brain style differences or differences in development...
  - The child’s behavioral profile
- Helps parents and teachers recognize the individual child
- Links the identification of the child’s eligibility to educational recommendations
- Remember that you are...
  - describing instead of labeling
  - emphasizing positive qualities
  - including signifiers through story narratives

Three Key Report Areas that Require a Narrative

- Background information
- Behavior observations and results
- Educational recommendations

Background Information

- Parents and teachers need to recognize their information from your conversations in the report
- Descriptive language in this section helps the reader place your conclusions in perspective

Behavior Observations and Results

- Remember that your readers are not likely to be proficient in the administration of autism evaluation instruments
- Scores and details about responses to specific test probes provide documentation but cannot be interpreted by your reader without a context
- The use of narrative descriptions allows you to document your findings in an accessible way

Educational Recommendations

- This is an important part of the diagnostic puzzle
- Recognize that providing a rationale for recommended strategies is essential
- Remember: do not assume that the reader knows what you mean without explanations
- At the same time, think *global* and avoid overly specific recommendations