Welcome to: Ascendigo
Elevating the spectrum for individuals with autism
What do you know about autism?
THE MAORI WORD FOR AUTISM IS "TAKIWATANGA"
IT MEANS "IN HIS/HER OWN TIME AND SPACE"
THE ASCENDIGO WAY

8 Guiding Principles
Guiding Principles

#1) **Connectivity** – Trust is The Most Powerful Motivator

#2) **Made for Me™** - People Centered Philosophy

#3) **A Seamless Experience™** - Proactively Manage the Environment

#4) **Words Have Weight™** – Communication is Key

#5) **Actions Speak Louder than Words** – Behavior Serves a Purpose

#6) **Ascendigo Teaching Method™** - Get to the Fun & Utilize your Toolkit

#7) **Time in the AscendiZone™** - The Art of the “Gentle Nudge”

#8) **Celebrate Each Moment**– and Create Memories that will Last a Lifetime
#1 Connectivity
What do we mean by connection?

A deep connection to a person's soul

We want to know - who you are, what you think, what your passions are and how you view the world.

We want to know - are you a safe person for me to be myself around?

Intune pathways.

We want to connect in an autistic way

We want to connect through our passions.

We want to connect through deep conversation, small talk is painful for us.

We want to connect through our shared life experience.

We want to connect through not following social norms.

We want to connect through stimming together.

We may prefer one to one connection.

Intune pathways.
Have you ever felt so in-tune with a playing partner that you felt so connected almost as if you were sharing mind?
Build Trust, Connection, & Rapport by:

- Allowing your student interests to guide the experience
- Joining their world by genuinely enjoying their preferred activities with them
- Sharing control, provide choices (unless the choices are adding to your student’s anxiety)
- Providing enough structure so that your participant can experience FREEDOM! (then you won’t have to say “NO”)
- Setting appropriate expectations and achievable outcomes (presume competency). Lack of follow through will jeopardize trust.
- Apologize if you make a mistake
- There is a “Physiological Linkage” happening all the time between you and your camper.
  - You cannot help your camper calm down if your sympathetic nervous system has been activated. (Take a deep breathe first, calm down, give some space, and then offer assistance)
- Intrinsic Qualities that will help you: Emotional intelligence (EQ), Compassion, Empathy, Respect, Humility, Integrity, and Honesty – as a way of being.
- Role of mirror neurons – empathy - “Physiological Linkage”
1. SWITCH ON YOUR EMPATHIC BRAIN

- ‘Mirror neurons’ are neurons that fire up both when we experience something (such as pain) and also when we see somebody else going through the same experience. People with lots of mirror cells tend to be more empathic, especially in terms of sharing emotions.
- ‘Mirror neurons’ allow is to grasp the minds of others not through conceptual reasoning but through direct simulation. Our brains mirror the state of other people.
- Neuroscience has discovered empathy in ‘mirror neurons’
- Most people are able to expand their capacity for empathy throughout their lives - especially their cognitive or perspective-taking empathy - by practising mindful attention towards other people’s feelings and experiences.
People Centered Philosophy:

• The participant, their families, and our staff are all equal aspects in the success of our programs and services.
• We consider the needs, desires, goals, and motivators of each member in this equation.
• For these reasons we prioritize a life of meaning, purpose, and wellness for all.
Proactively manage the ever-evolving environment:
The environment is everything surrounding your student that they can experience through their senses (this includes YOU, all other objects, all other people, etc. The list is nearly endless)

"Tune into this environment"

What is the most powerful influence in your client's environment?

• You are the most powerful influence in your student's environment. This is both a great power, and even greater responsibility.

We want the experience to feel seamless for the participant. All they feel is connection and fun. While you are working endlessly to provide them learning experiences, and growth.

Why is this so important?

Transitions - Due to executive functioning deficits, Sensory Sensitivity, and hyperactive amygdala/Fight or Flight Response – people with ASD can have tremendous challenges around transitions.

To make matters worst – for the autistic mind, nearly every aspect of life can feel like a transition.
What can you do to assist your camper, support their executive functioning, and reduce the stress placed on their Sympathetic Nervous system?

Don’t worry – you have tools!

- Create fun and positive routines (structure) during your time with your camper so they know what to expect.
- Proactively Plan – and Stay 5 Steps ahead.
- Proactively narrate the experience – what are you about to do, what is going to happen next, and why.
- Adapt the environment, and fade support to work towards generalization and success in natural environments.
- Prompting – PP, V, G, E-M
- Priming
- Visual Tools, Schedules & Supports (cone courses, etc.)
- Timers, Count Downs, etc.
- Fight Fear with Facts
The ability to use not just our words, but the energy behind our words as tools for teaching, transformation, and growth. While working with your client, every word you say, or don’t say, matters. Be Present. Speak from your heart with intention.

Your words have weight and power that can move mountains.

**Communication Strategies**

- Use declarative language (90/10)
- Premack principle (First-Then Statements) – reinforce non-preferred activity with preferred activity
- Tone of voice, body language,
- Clear and direct statements
- Calm assertive voice & energy
- High Emotional Intelligence & Affect create Influence
- Give the person enough time to process the information – and anticipate delayed response
- Avoid words with double meanings, sarcasm, or humor which may be misunderstood (unless they are ready to process or develop more abstract humor)
- If communication breaks down – use pictures and/or whiteboards.
Sensory Issues –
Tactile/Auditory & Communication Experience

TWO VOLUNTEERS PLEASE!
(Two Vowel, 4 consonants)

_____     _____    _____    _____    _____    ______
All behavior serves a purpose

- Functions of Behavior
  - Communication
  - To get closer to something we want
  - To avoid or escape something we don’t want
  - Autonomic Biological Regulation (Stimming)
  - ABC’s
We recognize that learning and acquiring new skills can be challenging, and also scary. For this reason, we strive to always get to the fun first – and then work backward for independence. This looks different in various environments, but the principle is the same – feel the wind on your face, put both feet in the water, get the participant to feel the intrinsic motivators of the activity and use those sensations as positive reinforcement.

So how exactly do we do this….?
We often implement Errorless Teaching/Learning strategies (especially when teaching extreme sports or activities that have risk involved).

**Errorless Teaching** means not letting them fail or do it wrong, by providing enough assistance (antecedent management & prompting) to make it happen.

That is a Most to Least Prompting Strategy.

What would be a situation that we might use a least to most strategy?

We sometimes refer to this strategy as "Productive Floundering".
A successful lesson is the sum of all parts. If any area has a zero – the lesson has failed.

Zone of Proximal Development —

Things we have mastered

Things we cannot do (yet)

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)
- things we can do with help
- skills we are learning!
Ascendigo Method

Utilize your Toolkit!
Positive Behavior Support (PBS)
- Shaping
- Visual Supports (Social Stories, Videos, Cones, timers, etc)
- Sensory toys and tools
- Timers
- Redirections
- Non-reactivity
- Affinity Based Learning Strategies
- Being Proactive

Priming & Pacing – Behavioral Momentum (your student will tell you when its time to GO!)

Prompt Pairing & Fading
- Work to Generalize newly acquired skills as early as possible and prevent prompt-dependence.
- When prompting and assisting – Fade Early and Fade Often!
#7
The AscendiZone
The Art of Gentle Nudge!
Comfort, Stretch, Panic Model
• Viewing the “Gentle Nudge” as an artform that we can continue to gain mastery over and keep at improving every day

• Using every aspect of our toolkit to keep our students in the stretch zone/ flow state as long as possible.

• Knowing that sometimes the most compassionate thing we can do is push just a little bit harder, but we must have the skill and judgement to know when its the right time

• Stepping up vs stepping down.

• Do not fret or get frustrated, get creative and keep working, the breakthrough is coming!
#8
Celebrate each Moment

- Be fully present in the moment, and make memories that will last a lifetime!

- Learning happens effortlessly when we are having fun.

- The Chase Bowlby Rule: Make every day the best day ever!

- Provide enough structure so that your student can experience Freedom!
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