Tips for Teachers

This month our topic is Tone of Voice.

Good ideas for teaching students to better understand these social concepts include:

• Write the following sentence on the board: “Joey is coming to the party.” Have different students read the sentence with a different emotion. This illustrates how the same words can mean very different things depending on your “tone.”

• Discuss that research suggests that in social communication, the true meaning of the message is communicated this way:
  – 92% with body language, tone of voice, and gestures
  – Only 8% with the actual words

Some researchers suggest that people with Asperger Syndrome tend to rely on the words to interpret the meaning of a social communication.

Research also tells us that people believe tone of voice before they believe the actual words used. So if you say “I like your hair” to me, but your tone is “off,” my tendency would be to not believe you.

• Use video modeling: Have groups act out a short play in different emotions. How does the tone change the meaning of the play?

• Have students role-play how to repair or react to miscommunications resulting from a mismatch of tone of voice and verbal message (“you seem mad at me”).

• Ask your students: Have you ever heard someone talk using the wrong voice volume for the situation? Did you notice it right away? Were other people noticing it as well?

• Talk about how “tone” is reflected in e-mails. Does this make e-mail communication harder or easier for students?

I am Kari Dunn Buron, a teacher from Minnesota, and I just love this magazine!

You betcha.
I Second That Emotion!

Our scale this month is about tone and voice volume.

When would it be O.K. to use a #1 voice as defined on the scale?
When would it be important to use a #2 voice?
What about a #4?

• Watch a TV show or a cartoon. Rate the different characters’ tone using this 5-point scale. Sometimes using the wrong tone can be funny.

• Try the “Try It!” activity and video tape students trying to laugh at different levels.

Coming to Our Senses:

Smells can have a really harsh impact on us. Some people are more affected than others.

• Make the smell chart on the board. Have a whole group vote and put tallies on the chart. How do your students differ? Are there smells that seem to be disliked by a lot of people?

• Have your students conduct schoolwide surveys about smell.

Gets-It Knows!:

Why did Roger say “congratulations for noticing”?

• How do we know when “too close” is “too close”? Did someone teach us?

• Try walking toward another person. When does it just feel right to stop? Do you all have the same distance comfort zone? Try this with your group.

• What about breath? Is it one of those smells you can’t tolerate?

Remember to write to Roger (rogergetsit@asperger.net).

The Cartoon:

What is happening in this cartoon? Why might you not want to say that to a teacher?

Something to Talk About:

• Talk about Claire’s problem.

• Emily said, “Don’t pop your think bubble.” Draw a stick figure with a thinking bubble on a wipe-off board. What are some of the things that people think about that should stay inside their thinking bubble? For example, if someone thought another person had bad breath, it would be best to keep that in the thinking bubble. Another example would be if your friend showed you a picture he had drawn and seemed very proud, but you thought it wasn’t very good. This would be a good thought to keep in your thinking bubble.
Remember that expressing and interpreting tone of voice can be a problem for individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). If your student with ASD sounds abrupt or rude, it may not be intentional. Find some time to talk 1:1 with your student to let him know how his voice made you feel; avoid talking to him in front of the whole class.

Because receptive communication can also be a problem, a student with ASD might interpret an angry voice as yelling. If this student tells her parents that you “yelled” at her, she might not be lying in the traditional sense but reporting your anger the way she perceived it. It is always a good idea to maintain a positive relationship with the parents of your student so that social misinterpretations on both sides can be anticipated and understood by all.

Some students with ASD have difficulty regulating their voice volume. One idea to help teach about voice volume is the 5-point scale. This is an example of a voice scale. You can use it or make up your own. Post the scale in your classroom and remind the whole class that a 3 voice is needed, or that it is time for a 1 or 2 voice.

**Voice Volume Scale**

5 = **Screaming voice.** This is needed in case of an emergency but is too loud in almost every other situation.

4 = **Loud voice.** This voice might be O.K. for gym time or outside at recess. This is too loud for the classroom.

3 = **Regular talking voice.** This is O.K. in the classroom when you are talking to the teacher or when it is group time and you are supposed to be talking to other students. It is also O.K. in the hallway and at lunch.

2 = **Soft voice.** This is like a whisper. This is how you are supposed to talk in the library or in the classroom if other students are working.

1 = **Silence.** This is no talking at all. This is a good option when everyone is supposed to be working or when your teacher is talking.
Tone of Voice – Word Search Answers

Word Bank: ANGRY, CONVERSATION, DISRESPECTFUL, EMOTIONAL, GLOBALWARMING, LIBRARY, LOUDNESS, MESSAGE, MUSEUM, SARCASM, TONE, UNDERSTAND, UPSET, VOICE, YELLING
Tone of Voice – Crossword Answers

ACROSS
1) doing something that is upsetting to someone else
2) when you feel strongly about something or somebody
6) say with words and tone
8) the type of letter that might mean yelling when texting

DOWN
3) a place where you might want to talk quietly
4) the quality of how your voice sounds
5) a two-way verbal communication
7) working on something over and over again
9) when your words and tone don't match
Tone of Voice – Quiz

Name: ____________________________________

1) When you are talking to someone, it is a good idea to keep track of that person’s face to make sure they are hearing you the way you want them to.
   A) True
   B) False

2) How your voice sounds when you talk is referred to as "tone of voice."
   A) True
   B) False

3) When you talk to another person, the actual words you say are the most important part of the message.
   A) True
   B) False

4) Words can mean totally different things depending on "how" you say them.
   A) True
   B) False

5) The following is an example of "tone of voice" that is a bit off.
   A) using all capital letters in an e-mail
   B) yelling when you are happy
   C) yelling hello across the library
   D) asking a question while shaking your fist at someone
   E) all of the above

6) When you are talking to another person about something that isn't particularly important to you, what might be the problem if the other person says, "Hey, chill out!"
1) When you are talking to someone, it is a good idea to keep track of that person's face to make sure they are hearing you the way you want them to.

A) True  
B) False

2) How your voice sounds when you talk is referred to as "tone of voice."

A) True  
B) False

3) When you talk to another person, the actual words you say are the most important part of the message.

A) True  
B) False

4) Words can mean totally different things depending on "how" you say them.

A) True  
B) False

5) The following is an example of "tone of voice" that is a bit off.

A) using all capital letters in an e-mail  
B) yelling when you are happy  
C) yelling hello across the library  
D) asking a question while shaking your fist at someone  
E) all of the above

6) When you are talking to another person about something that isn't particularly important to you, what might be the problem if the other person says, "Hey, chill out!"

They might have misunderstood your tone of voice.
From 1000 studies published in 2007 on all aspects of autism, those that reached clear conclusions or included quantitative data were selected for this review. Possible etiologies include elemental metals, especially the inconsistent evidence regarding mercury from the vaccine preservative thimerosal, not used after 2001, and chromosomes and genes with the conclusion that autism has a complex genetic architecture. Also, various parental conditions are considered, as are many different abnormalities in the central nervous system, especially underconnectivity within the cortex. Furthermore, deficiencies in mirror neurons have been proposed, leading to the “theory of mind” explanation that autistic children tend to disregard others. In addition, various global deficiencies, like an increase in inhibitory synaptic transmission, are proposed. Characteristics of these children include selective (inward) attention; underresponsiveness; stereotyped repetitive motor behavior; increased head size, weight, and height; various cognitive and communicative disorders; and also epilepsy. Therapy has emphasized risperidone, but some atypical antipsychotic medications have been helpful, as have robotic aids, massage, hyperbaric oxygen, and music. Nearly every conceivable problem that a child could have can be observed in these unfortunate children.