

Suzanne's Note to Parents

The Nonverbal Consciousness Center for Autistic Children is what I call a Verbal Socialization-Free Zone. Parents have to be prepared when they suggest using a verbal method or come up with a verbal comment, choice or movement while at the Nonverbal Consciousness Center for Autistic Children, it is not going to be held up as the "correct" or "better" way for doing the nonverbal task at hand because it isn't, and as a result it isn't going to be emulated by the rest of the people in the session. In fact, parent(s) should realize that what they suggest, unless it is in the spirit of the nonverbal exercise at hand, is probably not going to be accepted as a valid response given the nonverbal context of the exercise. The verbal comment, choice, or movement a parent makes during a session, is probably going to disrupt the flow of the session and might not even be considered a valid response to the nonverbal exercise at hand, so not only is the child not expected to do what is suggested or brought up by the parent, but the child may be able to help the parent come up with a more appropriate nonverbal response or choice. Does it sound like the shoe is on the other foot now?

I welcome verbal input from the parents in the session anyway, however, because it gives me an opportunity to demonstrate how different their verbal comment, choice, or movement is from a nonverbal comment, choice, or movement, and how off topic, unresponsive and/or irrelevant their verbal comment is within the context of my nonverbal exercises. For example, when a parent brings up something verbal, I will probably say "O.K., now that response is really verbal" and then go on to explain why it is verbal, and how what I'm asking for is nonverbal in nature, and then ask the child to come up with his own nonverbal choice and encourage him to participate in the exercise in a nonverbal way. The parent and the child get to see how different verbal responses and nonverbal responses to the same exercise are, and how the nonverbal response is preferred and required. Don't feel bad. There is a steep learning curve between understanding verbal thinking and understanding nonverbal thinking. You will always have an opportunity to try again, and choose a more relevant nonverbal response.

At the Nonverbal Consciousness Center for Autistic Children the child is in a safe socialization environment where even if verbal comments or verbal methods are brought up during the session, he knows he is not expected to imitate or use them, and actually the person making the verbal response is usually in a position where he/she needs to be corrected instead of held up as correct. Nonverbal input takes precedence over verbal input at the Nonverbal Consciousness Center for Autistic Children, because using nonverbal methods that are consistent with the child's nonverbal consciousness is the goal. I believe in the child achieving successes through the use of nonverbal methods. Verbal methods only set the child up to fail.

Being in charge of the session, I will not use verbal methods to teach the child. I am never going to accept a verbal response to a nonverbal exercise from a child or a

parent in a session because it is not "right" within a nonverbal thinking structure, and I am trying to create a nonverbal environment in the sessions. I will not accept a verbal method as a "correct" method for accomplishing a task in connection to one of my nonverbal exercises because again, they are not "correct" within a nonverbal thinking structure, and I will never allow a nonverbal thinking child to pursue verbal avenues for solving problems suggested by parents or other verbal thinkers in the session. The reason for this once again is that it sets up the child with a nonverbal consciousness to fail. I am going to only accept nonverbal solutions from the child and the parent(s), and only provide the children with nonverbal ways of looking and thinking about things while using the nonverbal analytical thinking process.

Parents might feel disoriented, show a lack of coordination or physical flexibility, experience an inability to see the nonverbal purpose behind the exercise, or not be able to think through and do a nonverbal exercise in the moment. This is usually because my nonverbal exercises start in nonverbal starting points and progress to a nonverbal ending points, set up nonverbal thinking situations, and require nonverbal choices to accomplish tasks. If you do not have a nonverbal consciousness, and do not perceive the world in the way your nonverbal thinking child perceives it, and are being asked to use nonverbal methods within a nonverbal analytical structure it is going to be very challenging for you. Don't feel frustrated. You are not expected to learn how to use nonverbal thinking or learn about it so you can then teach it to your child because that is not possible. I am there for that. Just go for the ride, and get a feel for what having a different consciousness from your own is like by approving of your child's nonverbal consciousness, and letting him explore and develop it in a nonverbal way. Parents need to learn how to let go, and stretch their minds in order to fully participate in the sessions with their child within the structure of nonverbal thinking.

Remember when you leave the Nonverbal Consciousness Center for Autistic Children, you, being a verbal thinker can go back to using verbal methods that work for you but try to look and think about your child's life in a different way. Your child goes back into a world where he is forced to act like he has a verbal consciousness when he does not. It is my hope that coming to sessions will make parents more sensitive and open to nonverbal approaches and they will be able to see the benefit of their child using them. Hopefully, they will begin to recognize nonverbal approaches when they see them in action, and will remain open to their child experimenting with nonverbal approaches that work for him during the week. I would also like parents to start to become more aware of when they make verbal suggestions to their nonverbal thinking child at home, and to try to stop doing it.

The best thing you can do as a parent if you want to participate fully in the session is admit to yourself that you do not know about nonverbal thinking, but are willing to learn about it – not so you will ever use it yourself, because you won't being a verbal thinker, but because you love your child who has a nonverbal consciousness. Your nonverbal thinking child will love you for your effort. On the other hand, if you

dismiss nonverbal parameters in the session, and try to come up with verbal solutions so your child will follow your lead, your child will also sense that, and feel like even though you brought him to the Nonverbal Consciousness Center, you are still not willing to accept his nonverbal consciousness as legitimate and equal to your own, and you do not approve of it or of him/her.

Don't worry, there are many rewards for parents who are willing to change their attitude toward the paramount use of verbal methods, and try to get into the spirit of the nonverbal sessions. They realize that even though verbal methods are effective and work for them because they have a verbal consciousness, nonverbal methods work better for their child who has a nonverbal consciousness, and it is worth it to them to learn more about their child in this way.

The way I run the sessions, and the way my exercises are structured, the child learns to trust and understand who he is, and who his parent(s) are by the choices each of them makes in the session. He realizes that even though his parents are verbal thinkers, they are attempting to do nonverbal exercises that are not natural or comfortable to them because they love him, and want to understand his consciousness better. This shows the child his parent(s) have a willingness to be open-minded, and try to accept and learn about him and his consciousness in an environment where he feels like he has special connection to what is going on. It is a true gift you can give your autistic child.