



Airport Thievery

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by Judy Endow

For most of my life, airports have befuddled me. It didn't so much matter earlier in my life, because the only time I used an airport was to go to visit my parents in another state. Back then, before we had the heightened security of today, people were allowed to meet passengers as they stepped off the plane which allowed me to simply follow them through the airport without needing to concern myself with the confusion all around me.

Then, airport security changed. People picking up passengers could no longer go through the security checkpoint. I had to figure out how to navigate on my own from deplaning to the checkpoint. No problem yet! I only needed to know one airport, and since I had made my way through this airport numerous times, I knew the route. Eventually, I was able to get myself all the way to the luggage retrieval carousel and exit the door to curbside pick up at my one familiar airport.

Then came a wrinkle in my navigation. I met a friend who lived in Kansas City. This was a much smaller airport, but size wasn't a factor – familiarity was the comfort factor. This new airport was novel. “NO, NO, NO!” is how I react to anything novel! Even though I had just passed 50, I felt I did not have the experience to navigate a strange airport on my own.

My friend assured me I could do this. “It will be ok,” she encouraged. “You only have to walk a few steps. Just follow the other passengers. It is impossible to get lost. I will be right there waiting for you.” Sounds really simple. Not so, I knew. A confounding factor is that I have poor face recognition, especially in crowds of people. Even though I knew my friend would be waiting, I also knew that I wouldn't recognize her. We

made the plan that she would say, “Hello, Judy Endow. It's Brenda Myles.” The plan worked.

Good thing, because I soon began to be invited to speak in places that required me to fly. Each time was so nerve-racking for me until one day my friend Brenda explained to me how airports are all laid out the same way. Even though the floor plans of each airport is different they all have check in, security, departure gates, luggage pick up places, etc.

Once the rhyme and reason of airport layout was pointed out to me, it made sense. There was a familiar pattern that I could count on. I felt a bit stupid for not ever having realized this, but that is the way my autism plays out for me. This sort of ordinary information that most people just automatically pick up often needs to be directly pointed out to me. Once this information is directly taught, I totally get it and never again need to be told. And so it was with airports.

Today I fly all over the country and no longer get anxious about navigating an airport. Besides having learned the general components of airports and how they are set up I have also learned that I can ask for directions if I should get lost inside an airport. In addition I have learned to look for signage inside an airport. Again, I didn't know to do so until it was directly pointed out to me. It is another one of those things most people just seem to know, but doesn't come naturally to me. Just so you don't get the idea that I have an intellectual disability, I would like to insert here that I got a near perfect score on the ACT when I took it in my 30's. My difficulties have nothing to do with lack of intelligence, but everything to do with my autism neurology!

Besides becoming successful in airports around the

country, I now go out of the country and have added the passport and customs protocol to my repertoire of airport navigation. The first time I went on an international flight all by myself I was nervous about checking in using my passport. This was something new. I detest new things!

I arrived at my hometown airport plenty early, approached the self-check in kiosk and followed the directions. During the process a directive flashed on the screen instructing me to "please swipe passport." My brain automatically defaults to a literal interpretation of everything I take in. I don't decide to do this. It is just the way my brain works. In addition, I think in pictures. This means that pictures pop up in my head. The first picture my brain had recorded for "swipe" automatically popped up when I read "please swipe passport." This picture involves a pickpocket theft – the thief "swiping" a wallet from his victim.

I was appalled by what the kiosk was directing me to do. How awful to have to steal a fellow passenger's passport! I clutched onto my passport even tighter in case the guy at the next kiosk would be trying to swipe it on me. I intentionally took some slow deep breaths trying to calm myself while keeping an eye on the potential thieves all around me. It was hard to calm down. I looked at the directive "please swipe passport" still on the screen I loudly announced, "I'm sorry, but I can't do this!"

An agent came over, looked at the screen, took my passport and swiped it – just like I swipe my credit card at the grocery store. Once I saw that, I realized exactly what the kiosk directions meant because I have swiped my credit card many times. My brain just hadn't pulled up the right "swipe" picture.

Since that time a few years ago I have become much more comfortable in airports. In addition, I have learned that I can successfully deal with the unplanned surprises that come up along the way. Ultimately I can get where I am going without being any more frazzled

that the average passenger. Chalk this up as one more thing a person can learn after 50!

Note: To read about Judy's most recent airport accomplishment please read Brenda Smith Myles Foreword in Judy's newest book just released, Learning the Hidden Curriculum: The Odyssey of One Autistic Adult (2012, AAPC Publishing).

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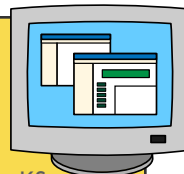
MARCH TRAININGS

MARCH 5-6, 8:30-4:00PM

Designing Behavior Interventions for Individuals with ASD

Presented by Dr. Ruth Aspy & Dr. Barry Grossman - Wichita, KS

For more information, please visit our Training Calendar, found on our website - www.KansasASD.com



Direct link to our website:

www.KansasASD.com

www.TASNBehaviorSupports.com

instruction. Large scale testing, like state assessments, may also be used to tell us where a student is academically and where to begin their instruction. What information do teachers gather on behavior?

Using data such as ODRs (Office Disciplinary Referrals) and suspension information only gives you a picture of students that are already at the corrective end of their behavior. Once disciplinary data is used to look at behavior we have missed the point of effective intervention. That would be like waiting for a student to fail an entire year before we intervene academically. For behavior data to be effective, we must look at several factors. Information like "Where does this child do well at school?", "Is this a new behavior or one that has been around for awhile?", or "What's going on in this student's home life?" is invaluable when deciding how to evaluate and teach acceptable behavior. How do you gather this data?

Behavior skills must be taught, just like academics. We need to see where a student currently functions, remediate weak areas for future success, then give lots of opportunity to practice their new skills. There are several screeners that are available at little to no cost.

Here are some books with screening and programming suggestions for teachers and schools- 1. Systematic Screenings of Behavior to Support Instruction: From Preschool to High School (Lane, Menzies, Oakes, & Kalberg, 2012) 2. Managing Challenging Behaviors in Schools: Research-Based Strategies That Work (Lane, Menzies, Crnabori, & Bruhn, 2011)



TIPS FROM THE CORNER: Collecting Data

When teaching academics, we use several types of data collection methods to determine current functioning. Teachers give pre-tests, quizzes, tests, writing assignments, and other assessments that are administered on a regular basis in their classrooms. They may look at the previous year's data to determine where to begin their instruction. Large scale testing, like state assessments, may also be used to tell us where a student is academically and where to begin their