



# FACILITATOR GUIDE

## EMPATHETIC DENTISTRY FOR PATIENTS WITH AUTISM



Copyright©2023 RLB Design. All rights reserved

# Table of Contents

**Introduction Slide 1 .....2**

**Two Truths and a Lie Slides 2-6.....3**

**Course Objectives .....4**

**Definition and Group Discussion .....4**

**Understanding Our Patients .....5**

**Communication Challenges .....6**

**Nonverbal Communication .....7**

**Nonverbal Communication cont’d.....8**

**Visual Aids and Social Stories .....9**

**Social Stories Activity .....10**

**Quiz.....11**

**Conclusion.....12**

**Conclusion cont’d .....13**

**Resource Material .....14**

**Notes for Facilitator, Materials List, Room Setup .....15**

## Slide 1



### Welcome learners

#### Introduce the course and yourself

**SAY:** "Good [morning/afternoon/evening], everyone! Welcome to Module 1 of our course on Empathetic Dentistry for Patients with Autism. I'm John Doe, and I am excited to be your facilitator for today's session. Over the next 1 hour and 30 minutes, we'll dive into a topic that holds immense importance for providing compassionate and effective dental care to individuals on the Autism spectrum."

"Before we begin, I'd like to express my gratitude to each of you for taking the time to be here. Your commitment to expanding your knowledge and enhancing your skills is a testament to your dedication to patient care."

"This course is designed to equip you with practical strategies and insights to navigate interactions with patients with Autism Spectrum Disorder, ensuring their dental experiences are as comfortable and positive as possible. We'll explore the characteristics of ASD, effective communication strategies, and the creation of a supportive environment."

"Our approach today will be interactive and engaging. We'll have discussions, activities, and opportunities to share your thoughts and experiences. So, please don't hesitate to participate and ask questions as we move through the modules."

"Before we jump into the content, let's start with a quick icebreaker to get to know each other better and create a comfortable atmosphere. Remember, your participation is encouraged, and I'm here to support your learning journey every step of the way."

**DO: SHARE YOUR SUPERPOWER** – Ask each participant to introduce themselves by sharing one thing they're really good at (their superpower). It can be anything outside of their work roles. Everyone shares a brief sentence about themselves (depending on the size of

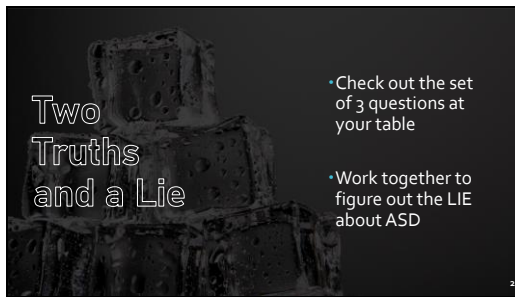
the group or if they are all from the same practice, you may want to skip this to save time).

**SAY:** Why are we here today?

**Short answer:** to learn about providing empathetic dental care to patients with ASD.

- How much do you know about Autism Spectrum Disorder or ASD?
- Let's find out by playing the game called Two Truths and a Lie.
- Show of hands if you are familiar with how to play the game.

## Slide 2



**DO:\*\*See the sets of questions in the Resource Section\*\***

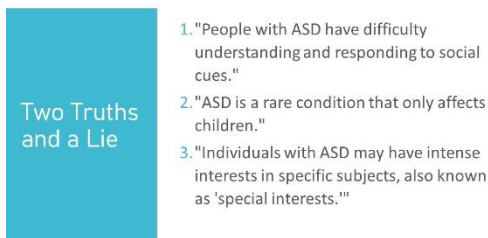
**A set of questions should be on each table.**

**Allow 5 minutes for activity.**

### ICEBREAKER

- Each table follows directions on the slide.
- When finished, display each slide.
- Each group will identify the "LIE" when their team's slide appears.

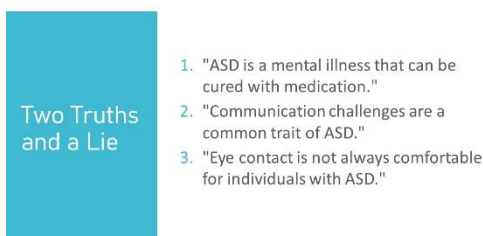
## Slide 3



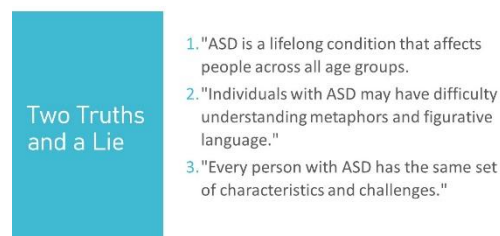
## Slide 4



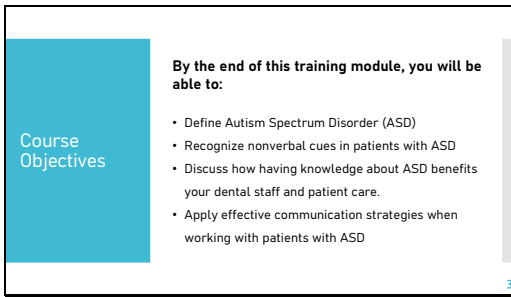
## Slide 5



## Slide 6



## Slide 7



Course Objectives

By the end of this training module, you will be able to:

- Define Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Recognize nonverbal cues in patients with ASD
- Discuss how having knowledge about ASD benefits your dental staff and patient care.
- Apply effective communication strategies when working with patients with ASD

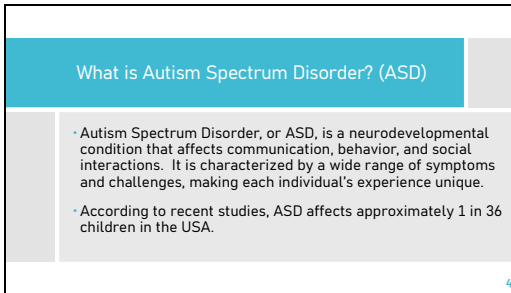
3

**DO:** Begin course content following the game.

Run through the course schedule:

- 10-minute break
- Course total time 1.5 hours, including break
- Logistics, etc. – restroom, participant guide, etc.
- Introduce objectives

## Slide 8



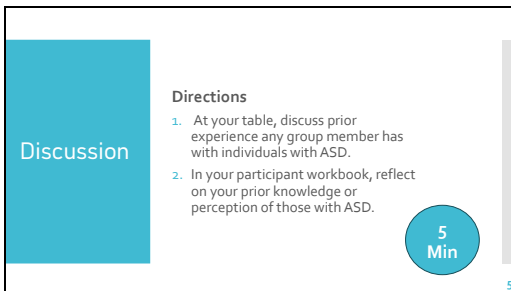
What is Autism Spectrum Disorder? (ASD)

- Autism Spectrum Disorder, or ASD, is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects communication, behavior, and social interactions. It is characterized by a wide range of symptoms and challenges, making each individual's experience unique.
- According to recent studies, ASD affects approximately 1 in 36 children in the USA.

4

**SAY:** “First things first – let’s define the subject of our learning today.”

## Slide 9



Discussion

Directions

1. At your table, discuss prior experience any group member has with individuals with ASD.
2. In your participant workbook, reflect on your prior knowledge or perception of those with ASD.

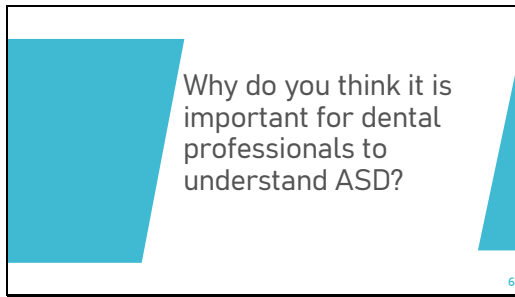
5 Min

5

**DO:** Small group discussion

- Add reflection of prior knowledge in participant workbook on page 3
- 5-minute activity

## Slide 10



### DO: Whole group discussion

Participants write their own answers in their workbooks on page 3 and then discuss briefly

#### Basic answers:

- Due to the prevalence of autism now, with 1-36 children being diagnosed, there is a high probability that you will be called upon to work with a patient with ASD.
- It does not only affect children, but it can also affect people of any age, gender, family background, or socioeconomic level.... The list goes on.
- To provide excellent care, we must be as prepared as possible, which means developing a compassionate and knowledgeable practice that serves all patients.

## Slide 11



**SAY:** "Before we move on, let me share a little story about communication challenges."

"Imagine you're planning a surprise party for a friend, and you're trying to coordinate with a group of people through text messages. You decide to use an emoji to convey excitement, so you send a message saying, 'Can't wait for the party! 🎉'"

"However, autocorrect decides to play its part, and the message ends up reading, 'Can't wait for the pity! 🎉' Suddenly, your friends are replying with messages of concern and confusion!"

"This anecdote is a humorous reminder that even a single word or punctuation can completely change the meaning of our message. It showcases how crucial it is to ensure our words accurately convey our intentions, especially when communicating with individuals who might interpret things literally."

"Let's dive back into our discussion about effective communication strategies and how they can bridge any potential 'autocorrect' moments in our interactions."

## Slide 12




## Slide 13

Effective Communication is Important

Good communication is vital for providing great dental care.

But for people with ASD, talking and understanding can be more difficult.

We need to know how they communicate to help them effectively.



8

**SAY:** “I think we have all been in situations where we feel we are not being understood.”

**DO:** Brief group discussion about examples of this situation

**SAY:** *[Using slide content as a guide for detail]*


“There are two main types of communication: Receptive and Expressive.”

“Let’s talk about the differences.”

## Slide 14

Challenges with Expressive Language

- Some patients with ASD may find it hard to say what they want or how they feel.
- They may use pictures or gestures to tell us what they need.



9

**ASK:** How can you support your patients with ASD?

- By being patient and finding different ways to understand them.

**DO:** Show a sample visual aid (communication book pictured on slide)


## Slide 15

Challenges with Receptive Language

Sometimes, patients with ASD may find it hard to understand what we say to them.

Clear and simple words

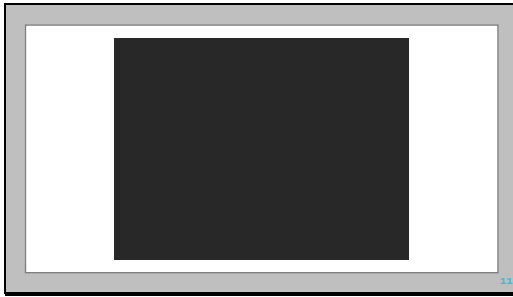
Pictures or other tools



10

**SAY:** Sometimes, patients with ASD may find it hard to understand what we say to them. We need to use clear and simple words, show them pictures or use other tools to help them understand.

## Slide 16



**DO:** Show the video from the course about clear and concise language.

**SAY:** I am not so sure about sugar bugs! But we do need to remember that patients with ASD come in all ages.

## Slide 17



**Clear and Concise Language**

Which explanation is clear and concise?

- ❑ We will use a prophyl cup and toothpaste to clean your teeth. Then we'll use floss to clean between them.
- ❑ We will put some stuff on a cup and use it on your teeth. After that, we'll use a string to clean between your teeth.
- ❑ We'll polish your teeth with a special cup and paste. Then we'll use floss to clean between them.
- ❑ We'll use a toothbrush and floss to clean your teeth.

### DISCUSSION POINTS

- Clear and concise language is not condescending or “dumbed down”
- Needs to be clear and free of any jargon

**SAY:** Using simple words and sentences when communicating with patients with ASD is crucial. It helps reduce confusion and anxiety during dental visits.

**ASK:** Which is the best answer? (It is the bottom left)

## Slide 18



**Nonverbal Communication**

**ASK:** What's an example of nonverbal communication?

*Body language*

**SAY:** “Consider body language the secret code of emotions, hidden beneath the surface like an iceberg. Just as the tip gives a hint of what's below, gestures and expressions offer glimpses into thoughts and feelings. By learning to decode this silent language, we can truly understand and support our patients with Autism Spectrum Disorder.”

**What does this look like in patients with ASD? Let's find out [next slide]**

## Slide 19

Common Nonverbal Cues	Clutching	Clutching the armrest tightly
	Avoiding	Avoiding eye contact
	Rocking	Rocking back and forth in the chair
	Tapping	Tapping fingers on the armrest

**ASK:** Is there a time in the past when you noticed this about a patient?

## Slide 20


Respond to Nonverbal Cues	Observe and Assess
	Create a Calm Environment
	Use Gentle Communication
	Offer Options
	Respect Boundaries

- Watch for signs that may indicate discomfort, anxiety or sensory sensitivity.
- Ensure the surroundings are quiet and soothing. Dim the lights, if possible, and minimize distractions to reduce sensory overload.
- Approach the patient calmly and maintain a soft and reassuring tone. Address them by name and ask if they're comfortable.
- Give them time to respond and avoid overwhelming them with rapid speech.
- Suggest options to enhance their comfort, such as adjusting the chair position or providing sensory tools.
- Respect their personal space and allow them to communicate in ways they are comfortable with.

## Slide 21

Discuss with a partner

- Imagine a patient with ASD coming into the treatment room.
- You notice they seem agitated and nervous.
- What would you do?



5 Min

**DO:** Learners pair up to discuss.

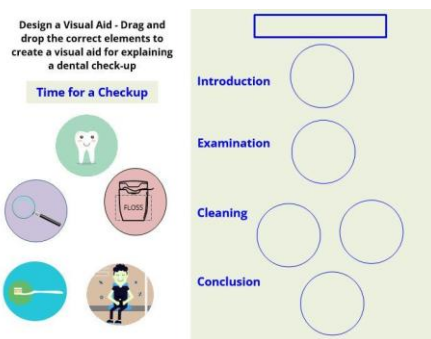
- Using response suggestions from slide 20.
- One person from each pair shares what they came up with with the rest of the group.

## Slide 22



**DO:** View video

## Slide 23



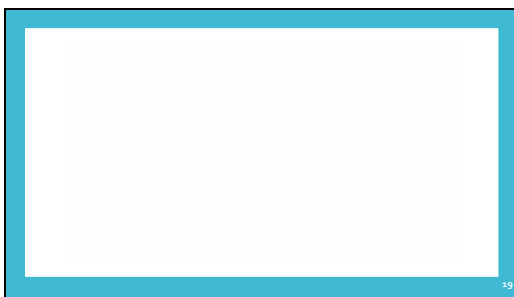
Let's further explore how visual aids and social stories can help patients with ASD understand dental procedures.

- You will create a simple visual aid for explaining a dental check-up.
- **[DISPLAY QR CODE FOR LINK]**
- Log in to the link and drag and drop the icons in the proper order.
- Feedback

**SAY:** We've covered a lot of valuable information so far. Let's take a short break to stretch, grab some water, and return ready to continue."

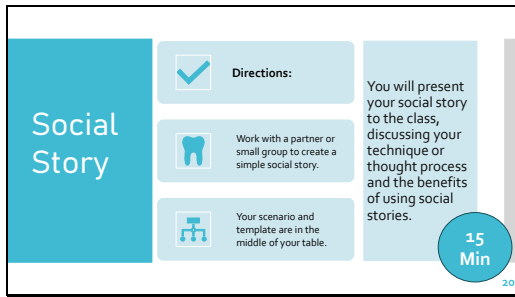
# BREAK

## Slide 24



After the 10-minute break, welcome the learners back and show them the video to draw them back for the final group activity.

## Slide 25



**Social Story**

**Directions:**

- Work with a partner or small group to create a simple social story.
- Your scenario and template are in the middle of your table.

You will present your social story to the class, discussing your technique or thought process and the benefits of using social stories.

**15 Min**

20

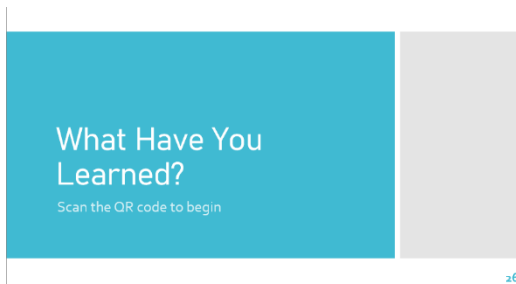
**ASK:** What is the purpose of a social story?

- To reduce anxiety and provide predictability for the patient.
- It helps them mentally prepare for the experience, making the visit more comfortable and less stressful.
- Creates a bridge of understanding between patients with ASD and the dental environment.

**DO:** Learners will form teams to create a simple social story.

- Each group is provided with a different scenario [in Materials]
- Provide learners with printable templates for social stories where they can fill in the blanks with text and drawings, markers, and/or colored pencils.
- Share with the class

## Slide 26



**What Have You Learned?**

Scan the QR code to begin

26

**DO:** Display the QR code for Final Quiz.

**SAY:** Now that we've explored the key aspects of understanding and supporting patients with Autism Spectrum Disorder in dental care, it's time for you to gauge what you have learned before we move on to Module 2 next week.

Scan the QR code to log into the quiz and begin when you are ready.

[THE QUIZ SLIDES ARE FOR YOUR REFERENCE ONLY, AS THEY WILL ACCESS THE QUIZ VIA THE QR CODE. IT WILL BE SCORED, AND THE LEARNERS WILL GET IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK ON THEIR SCREEN. THE RESULTS ARE FOR THE LEARNER; THEY WILL CONTINUE TO MOVE TO THE NEXT MODULE REGARDLESS]

## Slide 27

Drag the Communication Strategy to join its description on the right

Social Stories	Short narratives explaining dental visits and procedures in sequential and visual manner
Active Listening	Giving full attention, showing understanding, and responding to verbal and nonverbal cues
Patient's Preferred Communication Mode	Adapting communication to patient's preferred way of interaction, such as verbal or visual
Offering Choices	Providing patients with options to make decisions according to their comfort level

## Slide 28

Your patient is using nonverbal cues to indicate they are uncomfortable. What would you do?

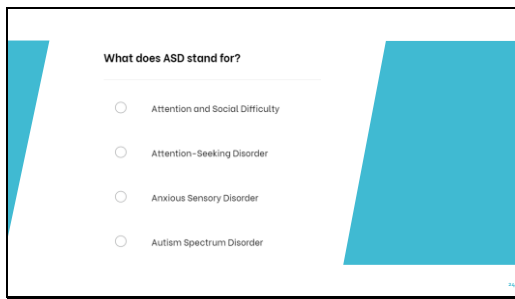
- ☐ Maintain constant eye contact
- ☐ Approach calmly and gently
- ☐ Ask loudly, "Are you okay?"
- ☐ Continue with the procedure as planned

## Slide 29

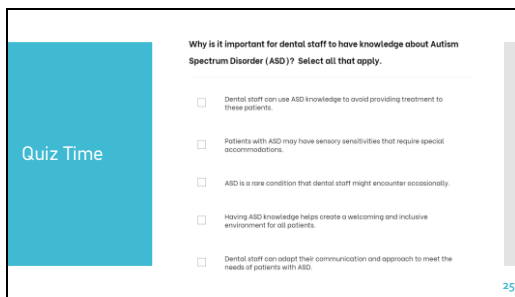
Visual Aids and Social Stories can help reduce anxiety and enhance understanding of dental procedures for individuals with ASD.

True or False

## Slide 30



## Slide 31



## Slide 32



## CONCLUSION

**SAY:** "Congratulations, everyone, on completing the 'Empathetic Dentistry for Patients with Autism' course! I'm truly impressed by your engagement, thoughtful discussions, and dedication to enhancing your skills."

"Throughout this course, we've delved into the key characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorder and explored effective communication strategies. We've learned how to create sensory-friendly environments and develop personalized communication plans. It's been a journey of understanding, empathy, and growth."

"As dental professionals, your role extends far beyond clinical procedures. You have the power to make a meaningful impact on the lives of patients with ASD. By implementing the strategies and insights you've gained here, you'll be better equipped to provide compassionate and inclusive dental care."

"Remember, every small step you take to adapt your approach can lead to a more positive experience for patients and their families. Your commitment to creating a supportive environment speaks volumes about your dedication to patient well-being."

"Before we conclude, I'd like to invite you to reflect on your key takeaways from this course. Think about the strategies you plan to implement and the commitments you've made to improve interactions with patients on the Autism spectrum."

"I want to express my gratitude to all of you for your active participation, your openness to learn, and your valuable contributions. As you continue your journey in dental care, know that your efforts make a difference, one patient at a time."

"I encourage you to stay curious, seek opportunities for growth, and continue exploring ways to provide exceptional care to diverse patient populations."

## TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

### Set 1:

1. "People with ASD have difficulty understanding and responding to social cues."
2. "ASD is a rare condition that only affects children."
3. "Individuals with ASD may have intense interests in specific subjects, also known as 'special interests.'"

### Set 2:

1. "ASD is a mental illness that can be cured with medication."
2. "Communication challenges are a common trait of ASD."
3. "Eye contact is not always comfortable for individuals with ASD."

### Set 3:

1. "People with ASD may not prefer changes in routines and environments."
2. "Sensory sensitivities, like sensitivity to lights or textures, are common in individuals with ASD."
3. "ASD is caused by bad parenting or upbringing."

### Set 4:

1. "ASD is a lifelong condition that affects people across all age groups."
2. "Individuals with ASD may have difficulty understanding metaphors and figurative language."
3. "Every person with ASD has the same set of characteristics and challenges."

## DENTAL SCENARIOS FOR BUILDING SOCIAL STORIES

### Scenario 1: First Dental Visit:

A child with ASD is visiting the dentist for the first time. They are anxious and uncertain about the experience. The social story should address the waiting room, meeting the dentist, the examination, and tools.

### Scenario 2: Teeth Cleaning:

An adult with ASD is scheduled for routine teeth cleaning. They have sensory sensitivities and need a clear understanding of what will happen. The social story should detail each step, including sitting in the chair, using dental tools, and rinsing.

### Scenario 3: X-Ray Procedure:

A teenager with ASD needs an X-ray. They are uncomfortable with new environments and might find the X-ray machine intimidating. The social story should explain how to stand still, the purpose of the X-ray, and the duration.

### Scenario 4: Filling Treatment:

A young adult with ASD requires a filling. They have sensory sensitivities to noise and touch. The social story should cover the steps of getting numb, the sound of the drill, and the aftercare instructions.

## NOTES TO FACILITATOR

1. The narrative indicated by **“SAY”** is provided only as a guideline. Refer to the slides to create your own narrative as you see fit. I have included a more specific narrative on some slides and a brief one on others that I feel have more basic information.
2. Materials will need to be prepared and distributed on tables prior to the arrival of learners. [See Materials List]  
**SUGGESTION:** Copy the Dental Scenarios and “Two Truths and a Lie” page and cut each set to distribute
3. The mid-course break is indicated after SLIDE 23 as a suggestion to maintain course flow and a break before the final activities. Remember to gauge the engagement and energy of the participants during the course to determine the ideal timing for the break.
4. A basic guideline is for learners to be divided into tables of 4-5 per table. If the group is very small, then they may work as partners. Use your own judgment.
5. Prepare an email sign-in sheet so that you can send certificates to the participants upon completion of the course.

## MATERIALS LIST

1. Visual Aid sample (dentist visit communication book)
2. Sentence sets for the “Two Truths and a Lie” Icebreaker
3. Templates for creating Social Stories (1 per table)
4. “Dental Scenarios for Social Stories” card (1 per table)
5. QR CODE display card for Slide 18 and Final Quiz
6. QR CODE display card for Final Quiz
7. Markers and/or colored pencils
8. Pencils for each participant
9. Participant Guides
10. Email sign-in sheet (for sending certificates following course completion)



Title _____	Date _____	By _____	Number _____

12" x 4"

## ROOM SETUP

- Set up a computer and projector or screen to display the slides.
- Ensure the interactive activities are accessible on participants' devices.
- Distribute the Participant Guide with key points and space for notes.
- Have paper, markers, and pencils available for participants.
- Place templates, cards for icebreakers, scenario cards, and pencils on tables prior to learners' arrival.
- Display the QR codes in the room for the Final Quiz and Slide 18.

