A dental professional in light blue scrubs is seated and examining a patient's teeth. The patient is lying back in a dental chair. The background shows a typical dental office environment with cabinets and equipment. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark grey layer, and the title text is in large white font on the left side.

Empathetic Dentistry for Patients with Autism

Module 1

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

Section 1: Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder



What is Autism Spectrum Disorder? (ASD)

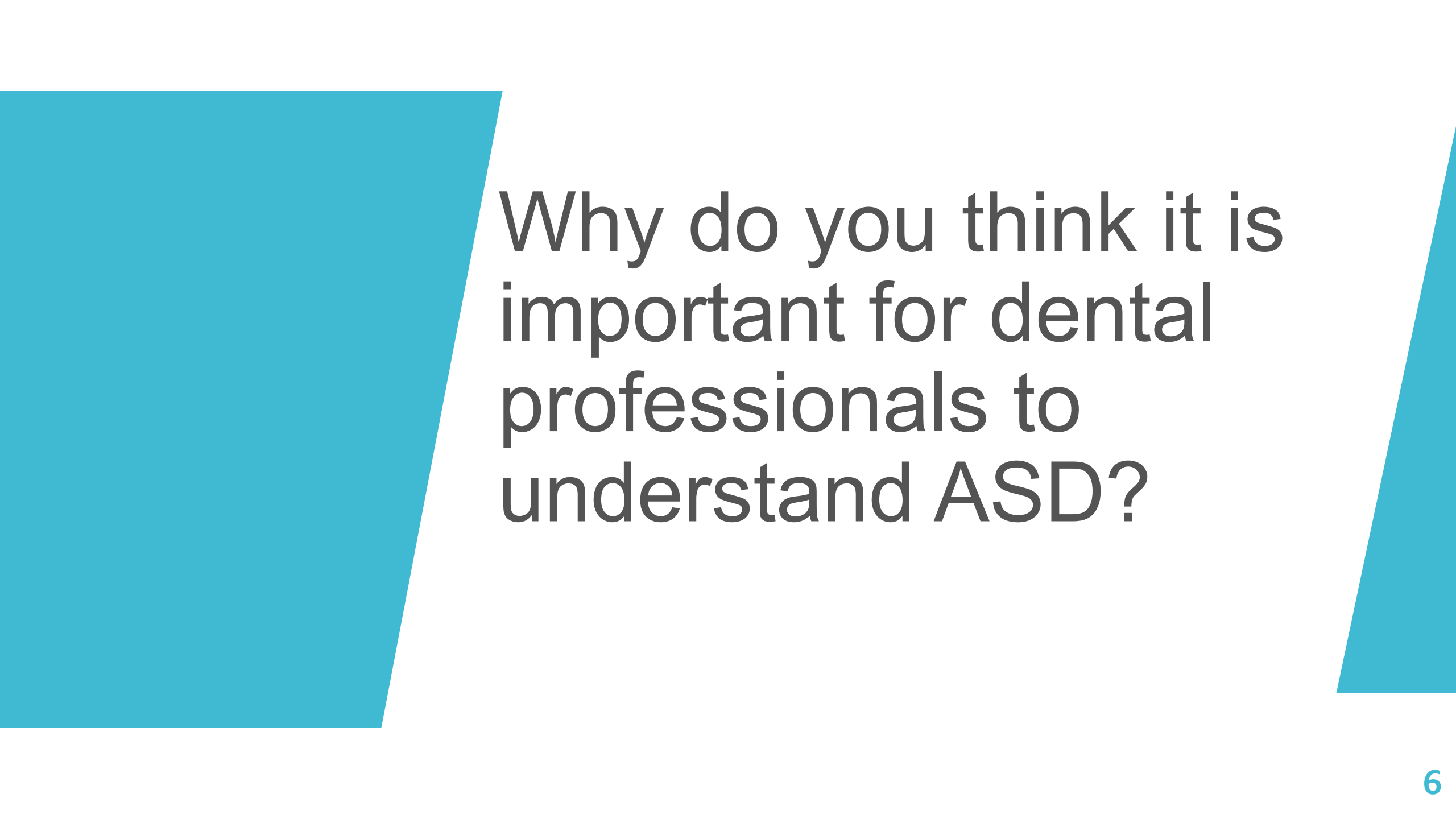
- Autism Spectrum Disorder, or ASD, is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects communication, behavior, and social interactions. It is characterized by a wide range of symptoms and challenges, making each individual's experience unique.
- According to recent studies, ASD affects approximately 1 in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

Discussion

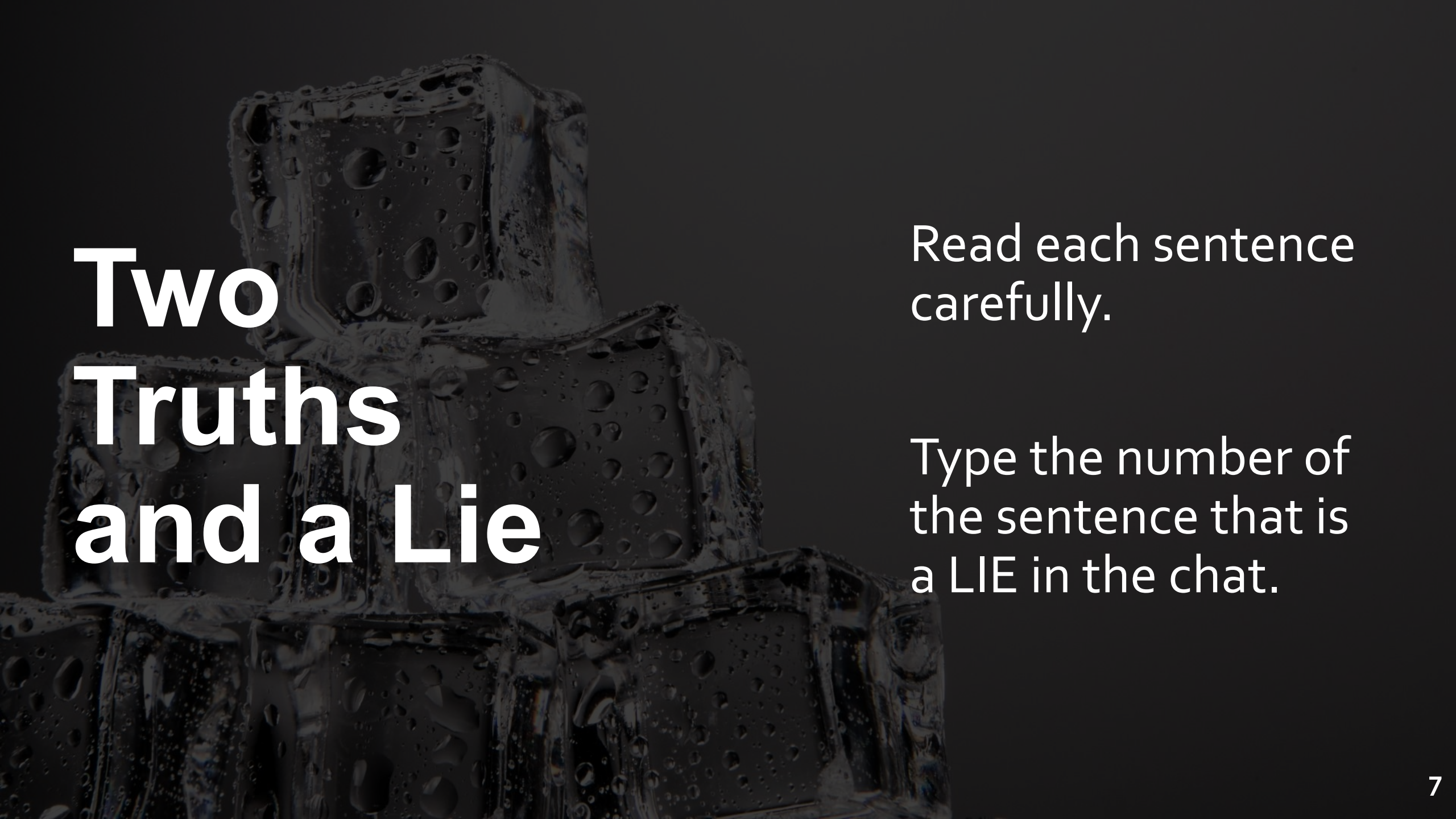
Directions

1. With your group, discuss prior experience any member has with individuals with ASD, or anything related to ASD.
2. Designate someone from your group to summarize your discussion when you return from Breakout Room.

**5
Min**



Why do you think it is important for dental professionals to understand ASD?



Two Truths and a Lie

Read each sentence
carefully.

Type the number of
the sentence that is
a LIE in the chat.

Two Truths and a Lie

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.'"

Two Truths and a Lie

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."

Two Truths and a Lie

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."

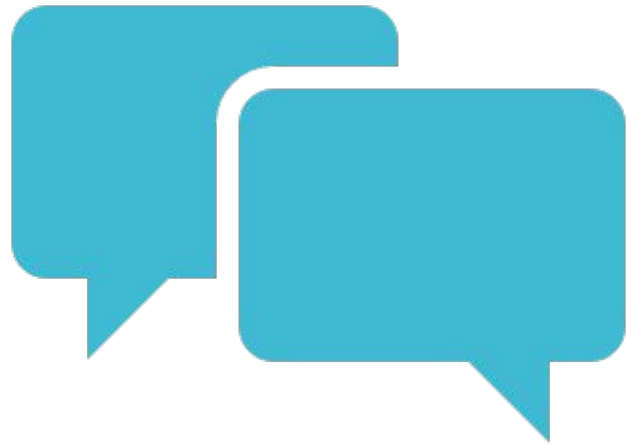
Two Truths and a Lie

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."

TIME FOR A BREAK

See you in 10 minutes





Section 2: Understanding Our Patients

Effective Communication Strategies



Can't wait for the pity!

Send

[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

CALL ME!!!!



Oh no! Are you OK?

What's the matter??????

What are you talking about??



OH NO! WHY?

Dude what is up?



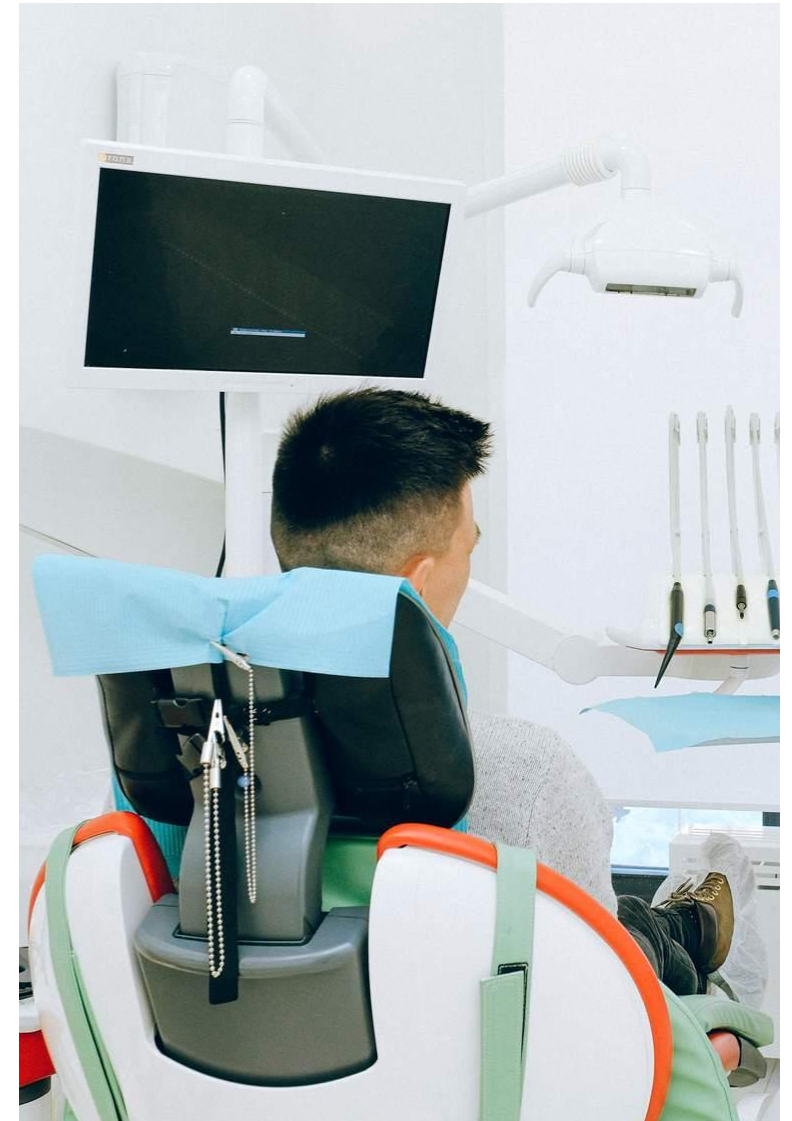
WHHHHAAATTT?

Effective Communication is Important

Good communication is vital for providing great dental care.

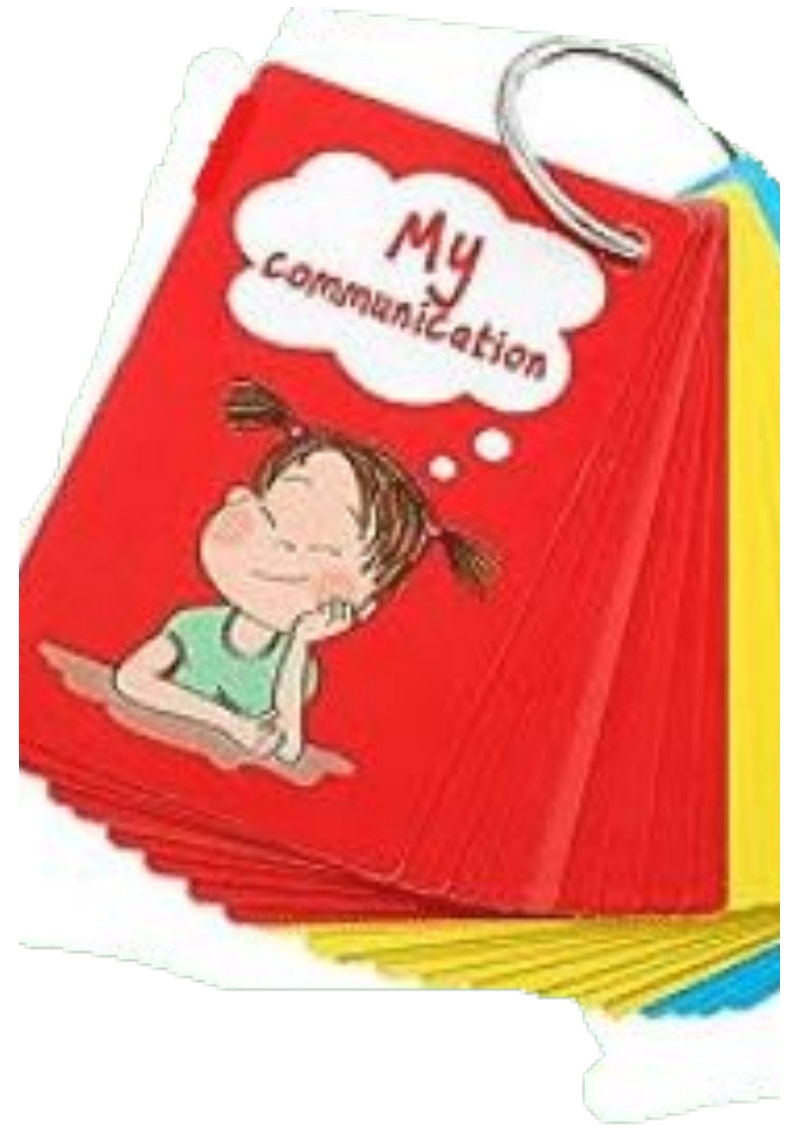
But for people with ASD, talking and understanding can be more difficult.

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



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.



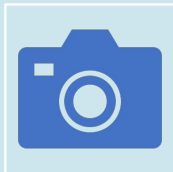
Challenges with Receptive Language



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



Clear and simple words



Pictures or other tools



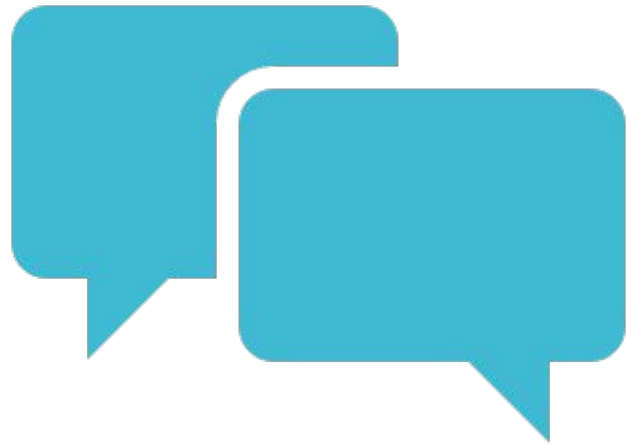




Clear and Concise Language

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'll polish your teeth with a special cup and paste. 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 use a toothbrush and floss to clean your teeth.



Nonverbal Communication

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

Respond to Nonverbal Cues

Observe and Assess

Create a Calm Environment

Use Gentle Communication

Offer Options

Respect Boundaries

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

Visual
Aids

Social
Stories



Social Story

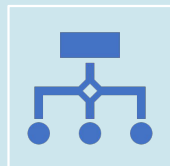
15
Min



Directions:



Open the link for the Google Doc containing the social story template.



Create a simple social story based on one of the scenarios.

Scenario 1: First Visit

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

Click the Star
for Social
Story
Template

Title of your Social Story

A line that sets the scene....

A line that sets the scene....

A line that sets the scene....

A line that sets the scene....



What Have You
Learned?

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

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

True or False

What does ASD stand for?

- ☐ Attention and Social Difficulty
- ☐ Attention-Seeking Disorder
- ☐ Anxious Sensory Disorder
- ☐ Autism Spectrum Disorder

Why is it important for dental staff to have knowledge about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Dental staff can use ASD knowledge to avoid providing treatment to these patients.
- ☐ Patients with ASD may have sensory sensitivities that require special accommodations.
- ☐ ASD is a rare condition that dental staff might encounter occasionally.
- ☐ Having ASD knowledge helps create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all patients.
- ☐ Dental staff can adapt their communication and approach to meet the needs of patients with ASD.



Making a
Difference...

ONE
PATIENT
AT A TIME