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## Syncing Up: Autism and Communication

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# Syncing Up: Autism and Communication

## **Abstract**

According to CNN.com, 1 in 68 Americans is diagnosed with Autism currently. Autism is a range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication, as well as by unique strengths and differences. (A. S. Editors, what is Autism) These difficulties in communication as aforementioned, is what the research found, is meant to highlight the advantages and tools needed to develop an inclusive and comprehensive social environment between those who are Autistic and their Neurotypical peers.

Informing and building awareness of what Autism is, how to communicate with Autistic individuals, and what methods professionals have given to encourage communication between Neurotypical peers and Autistic peers is addressed. Research shows the impact that communication has on Autistic individuals on college campuses. Survey data compiled at a community college setting provided an analysis of what communication is and what ways we can better communicate with those who are Autistic in an inclusive way.

## **Cover Page Footnote**

The Faculty Mentor for this project was Ashley Vasquez, Speech.

## **Syncing Up: Autism and Communication**

This paper, is written, to inform and build an awareness of what Autism is, how to communicate with Autistic individuals, and what methods professionals have given to encourage communication between neurotypical peers and Autistic peers. Including information on the Honors contract project on Autism and Communication, this projects, data, details, and responses. Concluding with future plans for this project and relevant research on this topic.

### ***Communication and Interpersonal Communication***

Communication, is defined as the ability to comprehend and create words, in never before heard or arranged speech, that is called, language communication. No matter the tongue, hands or device, all people should be given the opportunity to be understood and able to express their views when interacting in daily life. Interpersonal communication is defined as, “Communication that occurs between two people within the contact of their relationship and that as it evolves, helps them to negotiate ad define their relationship.” (Floyd) Meaning, Interpersonal communication, is the dynamic of a communication, that builds on the

relationships we form and defines our interactions within them. These relationships, can be from acquaintances to lifelong partnership. Another aspect of interpersonal communication, highlights the ways we communicate in certain environments.

When you are at work or at school, you will exhibit a different type of behavior in all settings and with all sorts of persons. This approach, in interpersonal communication is called, Situational Context. According to Donnell King is defines as, “psycho-social “where” you are

communicating.” (King) Meaning depending on where you are and who you are with determines how you will communicate.

In view of this, there are many times that this situational Context, will occur especially on a college campus. The constant hustle and bustle between classes, meeting new colleagues and teachers, and familiarizing yourself with the campus, is a regular activity for the neurotypical student at Johnson County Community College. In view of this, if you are a student, who has Autism, this constant change and fluctuation of environment can leave one feeling overwhelmed and at a loss for communication, at a time that is most needed.

When one has a sense of loss or uncertainty on their approach to a solution or need to acquire help this can create a traumatic and unstable environment for which a different level of communication and understanding is needed. How does Autism affect this social interaction and what methods can be done to achieve inclusive environments to ensure success for all students here at Johnson County Community College? Having a clear understanding of those around you with differences, can be a stepping stone in the direction needed to bring about that inclusive environment we all seek in our daily social interactions.

### ***What is Autism***

Autism is defined as, “Autism, or autism spectrum disorder, refers to a range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication, as well as by unique strengths and differences.” (A. S. Editors) This is to include a wide range, of races of persons, gender, abilities, other forms of diagnosis, and

labels used to describe or categorize an individual. In other words, Autism affects all persons, no matter their social, economic or racial backgrounds and developmental level.

Autism is a “spectrum” diagnosis, many who are diagnosed can range from mild to severe symptoms. This range includes those who would be considered, “High Functioning” to “Low Functioning”. High Functioning is considered, “an informal term applied to individuals with autism, an IQ of 80 or above, and the ability to speak, read, and write.[1] High-functioning autism may simply refer to autistic people who have normal overall intelligence; that is, are not cognitively challenged. (Synapse Reconnecting Lives Editors) Low functioning individuals, are considered, “Low functioning people generally look and sound very different from their typical peers. In other words, their disability is more visually and aurally obvious to the casual observer.” (Rudy)

The characteristics of one who is on the spectrum, are segregated into categories, behavioral, social, and communication. Behavioral meaning, different methods to which an Autistic individual will interact with their environment, in non-typical ways, i.e. sensorial sensitivities, stimming (flapping of hands or arms, etc.), insistence on routine (eating the same foods daily, etc.), “spending their time in repetitive behaviors are ways for them to reduce uncertainty and maintain the predictability of their environment.” (Alliance)

Social aspect of autism is, “People with autism have difficulty establishing and maintaining relationships. They do not respond to many of the non-verbal forms of communication that many of us take for granted like facial expressions, physical gestures and eye contact.” (Alliance) These social differences, can be misinterpreted and viewed as, a distance or aloofness on the Autistic individuals part. They are often delayed in their ability to speak

when asked a question or prompted for a response. This hinders the ability to be able to form and maintain relationships due to the lack of interest in others and activities, in order to socialize in a way most neurotypicals are familiar with. Including socializing on the appropriate developmental level.

Communication is viewed as, “People with autism often have communication difficulties in one form or another. There are some people with autism who speak fluently, others who are speech impaired to varying degrees and others still, who are unable to speak at all. Of those who can speak, they will often use language in a very limited or unusual way.” (Alliance) This can be seen in terms of parrot talk, (repeating the sentence or phrase spoken to them), only talking about their own interests, delayed response, and understanding non-verbal facial expressions. Due to the lack of peer seeking engagement, or at times a lack of social awareness, communication is impacted at a greater level, based on the abilities of an autistic individual.

All of these factors highlight the correlation of communication and the struggle with communicating when it comes to Autism. With the knowledge of these factors, how can one achieve a better communicative relationship with someone on the spectrum?

### ***Communication and Autism***

As can be clearly noted, communication is a daily function that is necessary to navigate the everyday and gain access to needs that are pertinent to all individuals. Without the correct supports, awareness, and methods, the social aspect of college can create a barrier for the Autistic student to fully achieve in their environment. According to a research study performed by Nicholas W. Gelbar, Allison Shefcyk, and Brian Reichowa, at the University of Connecticut,

recorded data on the social skills present at the college level for students on the spectrum in correlation of their grades, as well as, their feelings of personal comfort in ability to reveal their diagnosis to peers,

“only 41 percent indicated agreement with a statement about having the social skills to be successful in college. While the sample indicated overall academic success — 82 percent indicated they received good grades — they did note having difficulty with lectures, as only 38 percent of the sample agreed that it was easy to follow lectures ... Approximately 80 percent of the sample indicated that they were comfortable advocating for themselves, but only 50 percent indicated they were comfortable disclosing their diagnosis on campus.” (Nicholas W. Gelbar)

When unable to communicate in a way that is flexible and understood, by other peers, instructors and other staff on campus, this deficit in language method, creates a great deal of anxiety and a feeling of being “lost” on campus. The University of Connecticut study, also noted, “29 percent indicated that they are “lost” on campus. Fifty-six percent indicated they are lonely on campus. Only 43 percent agreed that it was easy to get along with their roommates, and 50 percent enjoyed living on campus.” (Nicholas W. Gelbar) While noting the anxiety, depression and discrimination on campus, “Only 31 percent of the sample agreed with the statement that they can cope with stress and anxiety. In addition, 61 percent agreed with a statement about feeling isolated on campus, while only 42 percent indicated feeling depressed.” (Nicholas W. Gelbar) This is troubling in the current wake of social equality breakthroughs for many social groups here in the United States. This research clearly shows the social equality for those with different social needs and communicative differences are still lacking and needing a great deal of awareness and support on college campuses.

The ability to be transparent, given empowerment and encouragement from peers about their diagnosis, and the ability to navigate the communicative barriers that many face, would be a start to this inclusive environment and give ways for the Autistic community to further their success on campus, both academically and socially. By showing others on campus how to communicate with those with those diagnosed with Autism, these methods include: informing peers by giving a clear understanding of what autism is, giving peers information on the things that would aid in their ability to engage with and maintain relationships with those on the spectrum and education on alternative communicative approaches when it comes to Autistic persons.

What social aspects are those on the spectrum needing help with when it comes to peer interaction?

When it comes to Interpersonal communication, for Autistic individuals, they will need to be trained on what is socially appropriate and what is not. Social blindness, is a term used to describe the lack of social awareness one with Autism exhibits. According to Teresa J. Foden IAN Assistant Editor, Connie Anderson, Ph.D. IAN Online Community Facilitator, describes social blindness in detail, social blindness, is the difficulty to decipher, “instantly process social cues, interpret people's intentions, or choose responses.” (Teresa J. Foden) When it comes to interpersonal communication, the proper execution of language formations, comprehension and the response to things being said is either processed slowly or lost in the process of speaking with the autistic individual.

Social skills as above mentioned, are vital to the daily social interactions, we all engage in. How can those on the Spectrum achieve this Social skills training? The earlier the better is the



key to this social success, these treatments include ABA (Applied Behavioral Analysis) which is intensive therapy to help, “guide brain and behavioral development back toward a normal pathway.” (Teresa J. Foden)

Social stories and comic strip conversations, create a way for those with Autism to better understand social situations on a daily basis, during special occasions, and other social events or moments that the Autistic individual will find themselves in. The main goal for social stories and comic strip conversations is, “In the end, the story could relate options for socially desirable behavior in the situation. The aim is to increase insight and help guide future behavior.” (Teresa J. Foden)

Hidden curriculum is the intuitive attributes of social interactions that many with Autism may not notice or pick up on. Hidden curriculum is defined as

" a set of social rules or guidelines that most people understand intuitively. <sup>19</sup> These are the rules that everybody seems to pick up naturally, that everybody just knows. However, individuals with ASD do not pick up these rules naturally, and these rules need to be taught directly to them. A child who does not intuit or know these rules is at risk for social isolation.” (Teresa J. Foden)

If the individual with Autism is not able to comprehend this information the ability to communicate is limited and relationship formation is lessened due to a lack of social awareness.

Augmented devices, social scripts and social skills groups, give way for the individual to practice and be given predetermined responses to ensure their wants and needs are expressed. Many on the spectrum can be non-verbal and lack the ability to advocate for themselves due to

the verbal limitation. These methods help the individual to have a voice on hand or a source of responses to be used, while the social skills group allows time to practice this communication without pressure of instant response and processing overload.

### ***Social skills Research***

Even though the social skills training research is limited, the current results of research are seen in the below listed research programs and universities, both here in the United States, and elsewhere.

Katherine M. Walton and Brooke R. Ingersoll, did a study to highlight the needs of the Autistic peers and labeled them into two distinct categories,

“Positive social behaviors are verbal or nonverbal social and communicative behaviors that indicate social interest or provide appropriate social initiations or responses in specific situations (e.g., showing an interest in others, smiling or looking at other people, playing simple interactive games). Challenging social behaviors are verbal and nonverbal behaviors that are disruptive, isolative, or otherwise interfere with the ability of an individual to engage in positive and appropriate social interactions with others. These may include repetitive or stereotypic behaviors, (e.g., making loud inappropriate noises, exhibiting peculiar or odd mannerisms in public, making repetitive vocalizations), destructive or oppositional behaviors (e.g., property destruction, doing the opposite of what is asked), and aggressive or self-injurious behaviors (e.g., engaging in self-injury or other inappropriate behaviors to avoid social contact, exhibiting aggressive behaviors toward others).” (Ingersoll)

These behaviors have been shown to lean towards the more positive area of improvement when Autistic peers are able to interact with peers within their groups of social environments. According to Ingersoll and Watson, results clearly showed the progress at hand when peer-mediated interventions were used to help Autistic individuals engage in their environments,

“A number of studies have found that peer-mediated interventions, in which typically developing peers are taught strategies for interacting with individuals with ASD, can be effective at increasing social interactions of individuals with ASD (Chan et al. 2009). Peer-mediated strategies are meant to capitalize on the existing social skills of typically developing peers to serve as models of appropriate social behavior. Involving peers in social interventions is thought to increase the number of available intervention agents, foster inclusion in school settings, and help build relationships between individuals with disabilities and their peers (Chan et al. 2009). (Ingersoll)

Ingersoll and Watson, did another study on how peer-mediated learning environment, where peers lead the lesson and modify it to the level of an Autistic student’s abilities and saw gains in this area to not only the academics, but eye contact, and social interactions that were before perceived as challenging were now positive. Ingersoll and Watson, revealed results as follows, “All three students with disabilities showed higher rates and durations of social interaction with peers (primarily targeted peers) during the peer support conditions than the adult support conditions, suggesting that the use of peer supports promoted social interaction with these peers.” (Ingersoll)

Another study on the peer-mediated interactions and education, was done by Laci Watkins, Mark O'Reilly, Michelle Kuhn, Cindy Gevarter, Giulio E. Lancioni and Jeff Sigafos,

each at four different Universities, both here in the United States, France, and New Zealand. The Universities are as follows, “(1) Department of Special Education, 1912 Speedway, D5300, The University of Texas at Austin, 78712, Austin, TX, USA, (2) Department of Neuroscience and Sense Organs, University of Bari, Bari, Italy, (3) School of Educational Psychology, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand and (4) Clinic for Autism Research, Evaluation, and Support, Texas State University, San Marcos, TX, USA.

The research was done on participants ages 14-21 years of age who were in an inclusive environment, (typically developed peers and Autistic peers together) are engaging on a regular basis, demonstrated the significance of an informed environment with support from peers. According to the study, “Ten of the 14 studies reported consistently positive intervention outcomes for participants across all variables measured... The remaining four studies reported mixed results but with a majority of positive outcomes “ (Laci Watkins) The research proved to be successful and gave rise to the notion that, “The positive outcomes reported in these 14 studies suggest that PMI is a promising intervention for promoting social interaction between students with ASD and their peers in inclusive settings. “ (Laci Watkins)

The research presented, clearly shows that involving and educating neurotypical peers on the ways in which to communicate and interact will bring the inclusive environment into the reach of those on the Spectrum and promote an increase of social skills for the Autistic peer. This brings a feeling of acceptance and the ability for those who are afraid to inform those in their environment about their diagnosis, in addition to bringing those with different abilities into a new visible light.

### *Different ways to communicate*

When it comes to communication, it's not all verbal. For Interpersonal Communication, since it is one on one, the methods that Autistic persons use can also aid and create a better chance to communicate their needs and wishes. Some of these devices includes: PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) its communicating using a pictured card to request or express something, sign language, communication boards, ( a board comprised of words, photos, and symbols), Communication cue cards (reminders on how to communicate their needs), conversation books( that use text, pictures and photographs to support conversation) and Voice output aids ( iPad, BIGmack) these are computers comprised of symbols and saying the individual uses to communicate.

Stimming is also a non-verbal approach to communication. When it comes to communications non-verbal aspects, the use of stimming allows those with Autism the chance to regulate their bodies and express their emotions on their terms. Stimming is often seen in forms such as, flailing of their hands, eye blinking, loud high pitched sounds or spinning things just give a point of reference. This behavior is defined by the website, [stimmingchecklist.org](http://stimmingchecklist.org) as, “the stim is used to regulate emotional sensory, social, and pragmatic regulation when it comes to helping the Autistic individual manage their own needs to manage their bodies. the stim is used to regulate emotional sensory, social, and pragmatic regulation when it comes to helping the Autistic individual manage their own needs to manage their bodies.”

To address the issues of isolation and the feelings of invisibility or feeling unable to disclose this information, will be better solved, by speaking to and with those who are Neurotypical and Autistic to find methods, challenges, and acceptance between two neural tribes to bring about the inclusive interpersonal relationship we all need and value.

According to the Autism Society, 1 in 68 will be diagnosed with Autism currently. (A. S. Editors) Though many right now are children, that means that these children will grow and become a part of a society that doesn't know how to engage with them to engage in the world around them. This 1 in 68 will makes up, 3.5 million Americans living in America, that is calculated to be 1% of the populous. If we don't look into how to communicate with Autistic persons, now, it won't change the fact that Autistic people will not somehow change or adapt just because society wants them to, but in fact if given the right supports, can change the world over. One word, one stim, one person at a time.

### ***Why I chose this project?***

This project was in part, due to my sons who are on the spectrum and also, because my husband is also an autistic adult. As I enter the world daily, I realized how little the world knows about Autism and not that everyone is uncaring, but hasn't had the opportunities or training that is needed to communicate with others in different ways. When it comes to communication it's the way we get through life, how we learn, grow, get what we need, and express ourselves.

My desire to write is part of this endeavor, I wanted to give the ones who are not as visible to the world a chance to be seen authentically and accepted, in a respectful and caring way. In short, this project is a work of part passion, part advocate, and part of my piece to show why when someone responds they are sorry because I use the word Autism, they can learn, there is really not to be sorrowful about.

The project is in three parts. First, I created with the help of Professor Vasquez, a video discussing how to communicate with Autistic individuals. Second, a survey on what people

know about Autism and those affected by it. Third, participated in the Honors symposium, where I gave a presentation and teamed up with a local company to give a hands-on view of what Autism is like. C.H.A.S.E. is the name of the local company who aided me on my quest for visibility and understanding that can only be brought with education and further insight at a kinesthetic level.

The video is about 18 minutes long, it highlights the ways that Autistic persons communicate and how you can respond, what to say and what not to say, and hearing from Autistic voices about what it is like to be Autistic.

The Survey, gave awareness and brought to rise the lack of knowledge, that some individuals who are not as aware of Autism may have and whom may want more information about it. I set up the survey with seven questions. The questions, pertained to the respondent's knowledge of what they knew about Autism. Questions read as follows, What, do you know about Autism? Do we have services on campus for those with Autism? Do Autistic people have a look? Do people with Autism have special skills or are they able to attend college or regular education? What methods do Autistic persons use for communication? Do you feel Autism impacts a person's life? What would you like to learn about Autism?

From the data, there were sixteen respondents total, with the seven questions all completed. For question number one, what is Autism? I noticed many of the participants had a good definition of Autism and what it meant. There were a few who didn't know, but at the end of the survey I did give the answers and some resources for more information. One of the responses were as follows, "I am aware that Autism causes learning disabilities, and sensory issues. Also, social problems such as not looking people in the eye, or maybe not speaking at

all.” (Attendees) Some even gave information further, “Autism is something that people are born with and it makes it difficult for them to communicate with the people around them. It runs in my family.” (Attendees)

When asked if there were services on campus for Autistic people. The responses, were almost split in half. 56.25% knew there was a program called CLEAR, while a 43.75% weren't sure of the services available. This is understandable, in the fact that unless you have a diagnosis or are dealing with a disability, you may not know what is available to those on campus who are, but that also, shows how little knowledge there is on campus of the Autistic population and their needs. If one were to be asked on where to go, in that social setting the individual would be lost and not sure what to do and then be left to figure it out or leave in frustration. It is possible to get lost in a school as big as Johnson County Community College.

The next question was, Do Autistic people have a look, more respondents, 56.25% answered no and the rest were at 12.50% were at a yes, while the 37.50% weren't sure. Current research, says there are, but when it comes to the ability for another person who is not a clinician or a person who is familiar with the diagnosis, they would be unable to see that it. Unlike down syndrome, most would only notice Autism if someone were expressing behaviors or were formally notified of the factor of Autism diagnosis before or after speaking with the individual.

According to Spectrum News writer, Jessica Wright, states Autism does have specific facial features, “The researchers also used a statistical analysis to create a decision tree, based on the features that are the most prevalent in autism. First, they classified children with an asymmetrical face as part of the autism group. When they compared this designation with the



children's true diagnoses, they found that only three percent of the controls meet this criterion.”  
(Wright)

Kimberly Hayes Taylor, writer for NBC NEWS, quoted Kristina Aldridge, Lead author and Assistant Professor of Anatomy at the University of Missouri stated about the look of Autism, ““Children with other disorders such as Down syndrome and fetal alcohol syndrome have very distinct facial features. Autism is much less striking,” she says. “You can’t pick them out in a crowd of kids, but you can pick them out mathematically.” (Taylor)

In terms of being able to pick out an Autistic person to denote their diagnosis, there is no clear distinctions that the non-medical professional, or person unfamiliar with the Autistic culture, could denote as Autism by specific markers.

Next, question that was proposed, do people with Autism have special skills and what are their educational possibilities to attend regular education and higher education? Many respondents picked the answer, “Autistic people are all different and come with different abilities. Some are able to graduate high school and others are able to get degrees and live independently.” The responses were as follows, 87.50% gave this response to the question above stated. The next highest response was that many were unsure of the abilities of those with Autism and their abilities with education, but would like further education, this was at 18.75%. This further, showed a noticeable awareness on Autism and education, but also highlighted the lack of knowledge being the second highest percentage out of five responses to choose from on the survey. This shows that there needs to be a growth in this area of knowing what Autistic persons are capable of and what education outcomes there are for the Autistic individual.

The next question given, was in regard to communication and the methods most used by those on the spectrum. This was an open-ended question that was enabled to choose more than one answer. The highest percentage of respondents, chose the use of Picture Exchange Communication, PEC's which is the use of pictures to request and convey needs on a non-verbal level, this was at 75.00%. Again, the loss of awareness and advocacy on campus on the realities that many people on the Spectrum use many different devices were not chosen as often, including non-verbal approaches. The highest percentages at 50.00%, after the PEC's response were, Augmentative device or voice output devices, i.e. iPad, and communication boards. The second highest percentage over all was, Other at 56.25%, many wrote in their own response that many on the spectrum may communicate verbally without aid and this varied from person to person. I was pleasantly surprised to see this knowledge was present and understood, across the Neurotypical peers on campus.

In terms of impact of Autism in an Autistic person's life, the respondents responded unanimously at 100% that, Autism impacts a person's ability to communicate and engage in social settings and relationships. Taking into account, how much awareness is out there is also a testament to this unanimous agreement of how Autism affects a person's life.

This data shows there is a growing amount of support and acknowledgement of Autism and the ideals of what it means to have Autism. This is a small group of 16 responses, but I do wonder with a larger group of students, would the results be the same.

The Final question given, was in regards to the desire to learn more about Autism. The highest percentage response, was I'd like to know some more facts about how to communicate with an Autistic person, at 68.75%. This is the main point of this project. I was glad to see that

this quest I had ventured, on to bring the tools and tips to enable this interaction, will profoundly be received on inquisitive ears and minds. The second highest percentage response, was I'd like to learn where Autism comes from, this was at a 56.25%. This is a question that many parents, medical staff, and others in the Autistic community and beyond are working hard to answer. For that to be answered, I can provide some ideas and solutions many have found. Many would state it is genetic, vaccines, age of parent at birth, drug prescribed and not prescribed, stress, vitamin deficiencies, among other theories. This is something, I do think is also the problem in terms of what everyone is searching for. When it comes to those who are different the idea is to find the fix to make the person more “normal”, but in regards to where it comes from it is fine to be curious, but while we are in the dark on it, it will bring less scrutiny and more acceptance as long as there is nothing to formally blame, at least in my opinion.

For the Honors Symposium, I gave a presentation on what my project was over and handed out cards that were made to give the link to my video on Autism and ways to better communicate with Autistic peers

I had cards made with a personalized logo, of a penguin with a red balloon on it, to emphasize the spectrum encourage my peers to view the video that was produced to better help break down those communication barriers. In addition, to bringing insight into the view that Autism is not all about tragedy, but about what ways communication can be achieved through awareness, respect, and acceptance for all those involved.

### ***Future Plans or Changes***

Future interests for this project, would be to interview Autistic persons. This gives a chance for their voices to be heard and highlight their needs in what they feel they are needing in terms of Interpersonal communication. Looking at the methods Autistic persons feel, work best for them, tips and strategies that they would like for Neurotypical individuals to know and understand about them. To give Autism, a flesh and blood representation, because at times it seems to be an abstracted and arbitrary diagnosis with no human connection.

For the Survey, expanding that to the college populous instead of just the honors program. Even though there was a good response, the data is small, and to get a better reading having a larger audience does help with what Neurotypical know and don't know about Autism. One of the questions asked, was what more do Neurotypical persons want to know about Autism. If there is a larger Audience there are more responses and concerns to be collected. The respondents can express their views and concerns, without scrutiny, but in view of that, transparency would also be beneficial to the Autistic person. If there was a way to give a questionnaire for each neural group then data could be collected with anonymity and create for a space to conversate and be translated properly without extreme conflict.

In view of the limited information on Autism and what it is like to be Autistic, a partnership with C.H.A.S.E., an organization in Overland Park, brings Autism to the fore front. Teaming up with C.H.A.S.E. (Community Help for Autism Spectrum Everywhere), would give the students at Johnson County Community College a hands-on approach to what Autism can feel like. The C.H.A.S.E. Sensorium is described on the C.H.A.S.E website,

“The C.H.A.S.E. Sensorium© is an edutainment (*educational entertainment*) event featuring interactive stations that demonstrate what it feels like to have sensory challenges

affecting those with and without autism or other disabilities. This engaging event challenges and educates people of all ages about every sensory system.” (C.H.A.S.E. Editors)

This method of a hands-on approach gives all those who want more information on Autism the ability to experience the realities of what being on the Spectrum is like. They can now not just hear about, but receive a small insight onto what being on the Spectrum is like first hand.

This event would be once a year in April to celebrate and build awareness on what Autism is like for those on the spectrum. Opening up a conversation, that many may shy away from or are limited in their exposure to Autistic persons in their social environment on the campus to allow for questions and answers to be addressed on both ends of the conversation groups. Allowing other Autistic students at JCCC, if they feel comfortable, to present and help those on campus to realize that Autism is not visible to the eye, but that what can be hiding in plain sight isn't silent or in able, but that there is a way to be involved in creation of an inclusive environment. An environment, in which all people no matter who they are can grow, learn, and achieve in.

The video, is talking about ways to communicate with Autistic persons, but it may be more beneficial to break that down into a series of smaller clips. In view of information overload and college students on campus, getting the information in bitesize pieces seems to reach the college populous better. For the video, also adding more edits, and working with the media department to possibly, create a channel on the JCCC TV to talk about this information and continue the needed awareness on campus. So, that others can be given the proper understanding and acceptance needed to be included on all levels.

Finally, many from the survey asked how they could be helpful to others on the Spectrum, by ways of volunteer work. Since the Honors Program, has requirements for volunteer work to finish the Honors Program at JCCC, coupling with C.H.A.S.E. in their efforts to build awareness and outreach in both the classrooms and elsewhere would be a great asset to the program and bring light to the programs available for those with the diagnosis on campus.

### *Conclusion*

In order for us all to communicate together, we all must have a way to communicate that can be understood and accepted. When it comes to Autism and communication, there are more strengths and abilities than barriers and inabilities. If we spend the time learning, through communication, no matter the method or form, we can all gain our voice in this thing we call life. Part of interpersonal communication is to communicate between each other, so open your communication horizons and build this bridge needed to neuro-diversify interpersonal communication.

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