

The Wonderful Use of Storybooks (For Young Children with High-Functioning Autism)



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For young children with autism who have intellectual and language abilities at the 5-6 year old level, what kind of books should they read? What techniques should parents use when reading with their children?

Young children with high-functioning autism should be able to understand simple moral stories. Parents can refer to the "social story" format to help children with autism effectively understand the content. When the child is familiar with the story content, parents can replace the main character with other real people, or even the child themselves, so that the child can gradually put themselves into the moral story scenario. The story characters can be changed, and the story plot can also be slightly altered: for example, "grandma's house" can be changed to "aunt's house", allowing the child to flexibly apply what they have learned. Of course, changes to the characters and plot should be made before the child develops rigidity towards the story details. As for fables, fairy tales and mythological stories that commonly use abstract metaphors, they can be used only when the child with autism has the ability to generalize their knowledge.

In terms of cognition, when the child's comprehension reaches a certain level, parents can emphasize emotional words in the story, such as "When she saw the dog, Mei Mei was very scared." When the child is ready to learn the concept of sequence, parents can emphasize the description of time, such as "Mei Mei did something wrong, and then she said she was sorry." Based on the child's level, parents can utilize each page of the storybook, adding or emphasizing appropriate words.



In terms of parent-child interaction, for children with autism who have higher abilities, they can take turns with their parents to tell the story, one sentence at a time. This method not only trains the child's ability to continue the story and focus on listening to others, but also allows the child to deepen their impression of the story through active participation. By using storybooks flexibly, parents can meet the developmental needs of the child and promote parent-child interaction. Children with autism often lack imaginative ability, so storybooks that come with character dolls can be very useful: initially, just tell the story, then add the dolls, and gradually reduce the use of the storybook, until finally using only the dolls to tell the story, and using the "one sentence for you, one sentence for me" method to guide the child out of the storybook and into the world of imaginative play.

In terms of social cognition, parents who use comics can use correction fluid to white out the "speech bubbles" of the characters, then work with the child to create new dialogues. Initially, they can modify certain words or phrases, and when both parties are familiar with the method, they can modify more parts, until all the dialogues are self-created. Daring parents can even try to custom-make storybooks for their child and design different ways of storytelling to attract the child to learn the social concepts they need.