

TAKE IT FROM TEMPLE

5 Tips for Working with Children with Autism

Based on a webinar by Dr. Temple Grandin



PresenceLearning

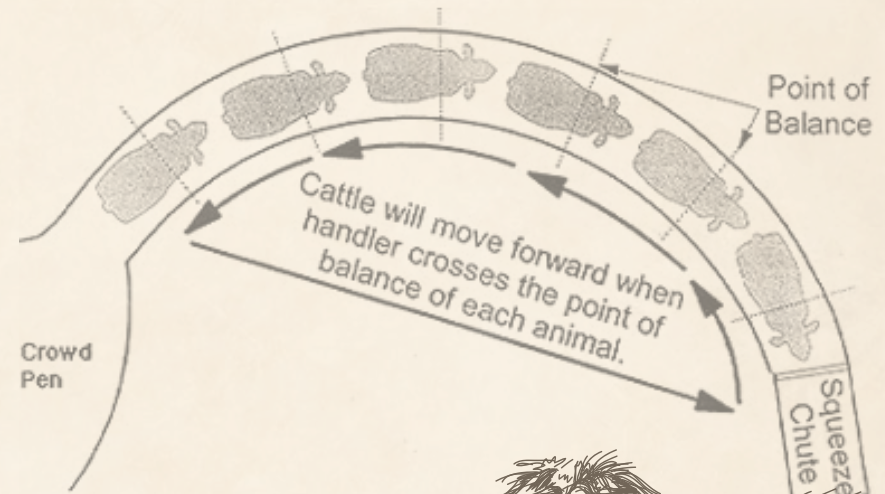
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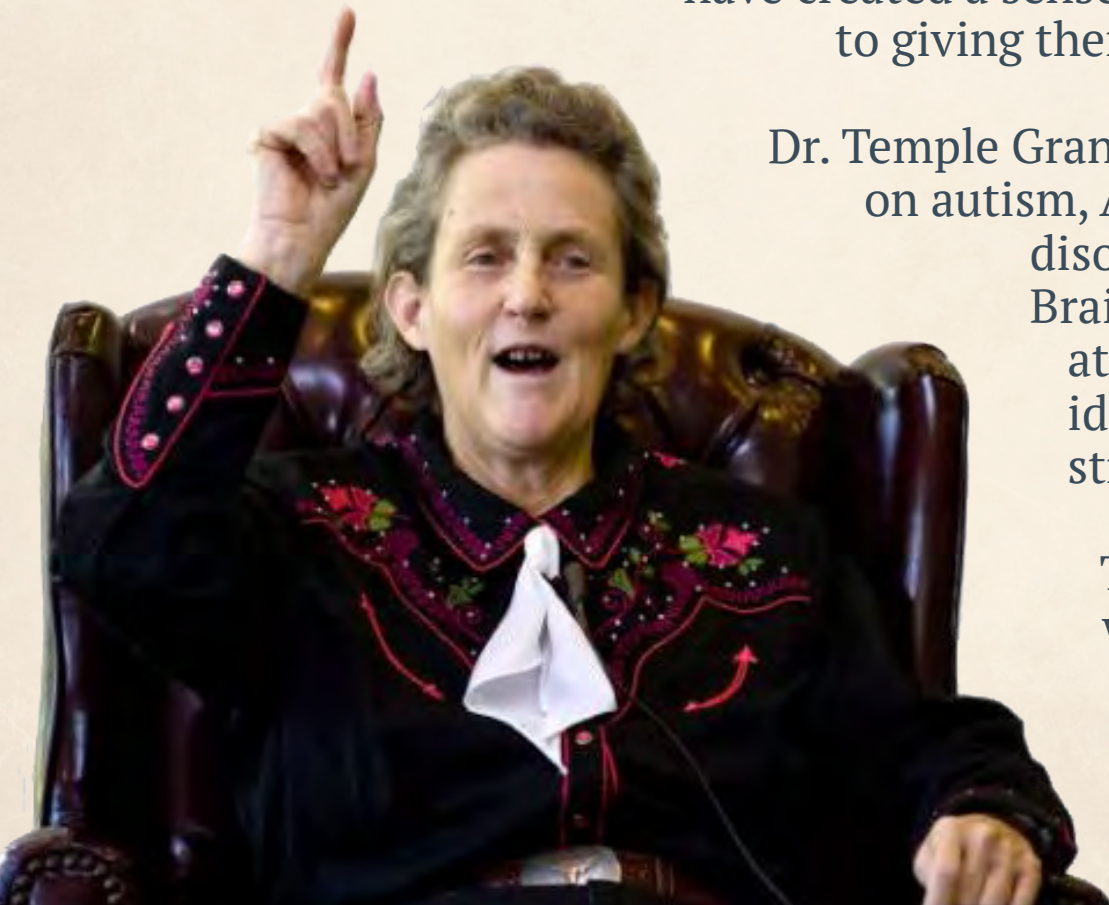
THE AUTISTIC BRAIN

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, autism rates have increased to one in 68 children, up from one in 88 just two years ago. Families and school administrators alike are seeking a deeper understanding and new strategies to serve a growing population of students with autism. In schools, an overburdened system and the Common Core's emphasis on language and communications skills have created a sense of urgency to find the best approaches to giving them appropriate access to the curriculum.

Dr. Temple Grandin is a leading speaker, writer, and expert on autism, Asperger's syndrome, and other mental disorders. Her webinar on "The Autistic Brain" with PresenceLearning drew record attendees to hear her insights and practical ideas to better understand why particular strategies do and don't work.

This eBook distills the advice she shared with our audience.

Watch the webinar [here](#). >>



TIP 1

FOCUS ON THE PROBLEM

Autism is not like other diagnoses. Unlike tuberculosis, autism is not precise. It's a behavioral profile that covers a wide spectrum. On one end of the spectrum, there are those geniuses, like Albert Einstein or Steve Jobs, who simply may be perceived as quirky. At the other end, a child may be very disabled. These children may be mentally challenged, have epilepsy, be unable to tolerate many environments, and have poor or no language skills.

Don't focus on the label of autism. Focus on the specific problem or problems that a child has.

TEMPLE RECOMMENDS

"The Autistic Brain" offers detailed information on sensory issues and practical tips for dealing with different types of sensitivities.

Get the book [here](#). >>

Problems making friends?

Find a special interest group like scouting, 4H, or a model rocket club.

Not talking?

ABA-type therapy, Denver Start Program, or other evidence-based treatments and 20 hours a week with an effective teacher can all help. Be observant to identify biological or sensory issues.

Behavior problems?

Look for causes (medical, sensory), be aware of manipulation, have consistent rules at school and home, provide a safe place and give time for tuning out.

Sensory issues?

Sensory disorders vary from mildly irritating to totally debilitating. There is no single solution; contact an occupational therapist and try different things to see what works.

Problems with bullying?

Special interest groups can provide a real refuge. But if it gets to the point where school no longer works for the child because of excessive bullying, consider virtual schooling, home schooling, and other options.

TIP 2

BUILD ON STRENGTHS

People with autism have uneven strengths. They may excel in one area, such as art or math, but be unable to understand other areas at all. Temple Grandin, an art mind and visual thinker, could not do algebra and struggled terribly with French. However, she was encouraged to build on her strengths in drawing and science and became extremely successful in animal science and designing slaughter houses that minimize panic and cruelty.

Knowing how a child thinks goes a long way toward identifying strengths and encouraging their development.



There are many kinds of minds. A child's type of thinking usually shows up by **third or fourth grade**. Different types include:

- **Pattern** — Music and math minds who think in patterns. They often have trouble with reading. Programmers and engineers are pattern thinkers.
- **Visual** — Art minds who think in pictures. They often have trouble with math and abstract concepts.
- **Verbal** — Verbal thinkers gravitate toward all things verbal and written. May be auditory learners.
- **Combination** — Other thinkers are a combination of two or more types.

Develop and build on **abilities and strengths**.

Find **accommodations that enable** but do not overprotect and shelter.

Try a **variety of learning approaches** and use the method that works.



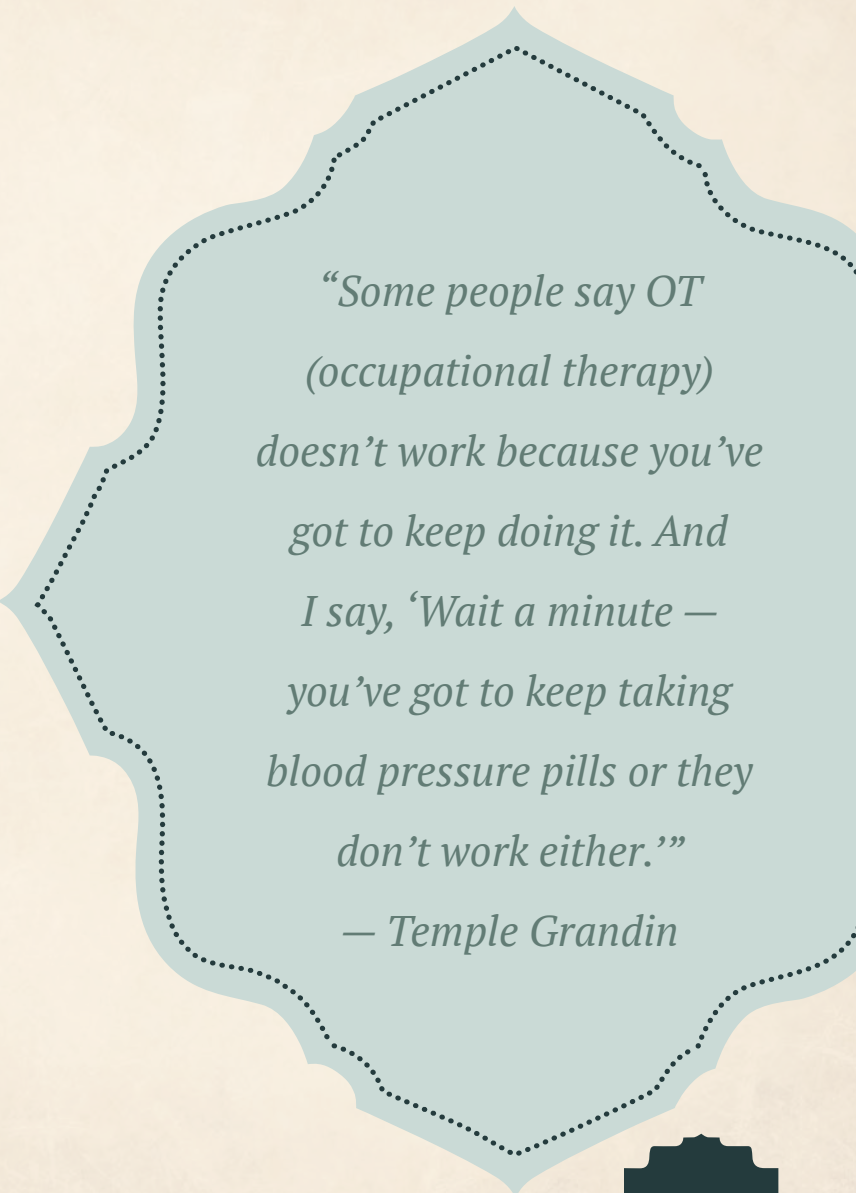
TIP 3

BE CONSISTENT

Consistency is key when working on problem behaviors. Parents, educators, and caregivers need to be consistent in dealing with a problem as it occurs, and be on the same page as a team about rules and their consequences. As Eustacia Cutler, Temple's mother, says, "It takes a village to raise a child."

Growing up, Temple wasn't allowed to watch television at home in the evening if she had a temper tantrum at school. Temple's mother communicated with her daughter's teachers, and was therefore able to follow through on the consequence.

Therapy also requires consistency. Parents, grandparents, aides, and caregivers can all practice the skills and techniques that a licensed speech therapist or occupational therapist works on with the child.



*"Some people say OT
(occupational therapy)
doesn't work because you've
got to keep doing it. And
I say, 'Wait a minute —
you've got to keep taking
blood pressure pills or they
don't work either.'"*
— Temple Grandin

TEMPLE SAYS

Communicate as a team.

Everyone involved with the child, including parents, teachers, therapists, and others, should be on the same page regarding problems, rules, and therapy.

Be consistent.

Establish rules and follow through on them with consequences. Have the full team reinforce the work of licensed therapists.

Think bottom up.

Find out if behaviors are caused by a medical problem or sensory overload. Children act out when they are in pain, stressed, or frightened.

TIP 4

STRETCH 'EM!

You need to stretch children with autism outside their comfort zones. Often this involves social skills: learning how to introduce themselves, order at a restaurant, or shake hands. But don't surprise children with autism! For instance, rather than taking them to a restaurant and expecting them to order right off the bat, prepare them. Practice ordering at home. Let the child watch you order. Build up to learning this life skill.

You also need to stretch kids to broaden out their skills and interests. When Temple was a child she loved drawing horse heads. Her mother encouraged her to draw the whole horse, and to show where the horses lived. For other types of thinkers, you can broaden it out in other ways. For example, with a child who likes airplanes, you can read books about aviation or create math problems about flying. There are many ways you can stretch and push children while still tapping into their interests.



TEMPLE SAYS

Give choices.

A pivotal event in Temple's life was to go to her aunt's ranch when she was young. She had a choice to go for two weeks or for the whole summer, but staying at home was not an option even though she was afraid to go.

Teach social skills.

Have the child practice shaking hands, greeting people, and introducing himself or herself.

Teach life skills.

Give the child responsibilities and make sure he or she practices things like ordering food or buying groceries.

TIP 5

GET REAL WORLD EXPERIENCE

Work skills are critically important. Start early with job skills. Kids as young as middle school can start by doing things like setting up chairs in the church or synagogue, walking dogs, and doing chores. Older teens can work on building or maintaining websites, or work in retail or on a farm to get jobs skills.

Find hands-on classes. If the school doesn't offer classes like cooking, sewing, woodshop, or welding, find classes in your community where hands-on skills and problem-solving can be learned.

***Project Search** is an
immersive high school
transition program with 200
sites in the United States,
Canada, England, Scotland,
and Australia.*

*Learn more **here.** >>*

TEMPLE SAYS

Get creative.

What needs doing in your school or neighborhood? Where can your teen help?

Use your network.

Jobs rarely fall in anyone's lap. Call on your family, friends, and community.

Find real work.

People with autism know when they are being asked to do fake work. Setting and unsetting a table 50 times just leads to frustration. But doing something of value, say, making sure all the horses in a stable have fresh water — that is real work.

ABOUT TEMPLE GRANDIN

Dr. Temple Grandin is a role model to millions of people worldwide. She has been featured in *The New York Times*, the *Today Show*, *People Magazine*, *Forbes*, *Larry King Live*, and numerous other programs and publications. She has authored or co-authored a dozen books, most recently *The Autistic Brain: Thinking Across the Spectrum*, and is also the subject of both a BBC documentary and an HBO biographical film starring Claire Danes, which won seven Emmy Awards.

A professor of Animal Science at Colorado State University, Dr. Grandin has also designed livestock handling facilities around the world. Over half the cattle in the United States and Canada are handled in facilities of her design. She credits being a visual thinker to being able to “see like a cow,” leading to more humane designs that have reduced stress and suffering in livestock handling.



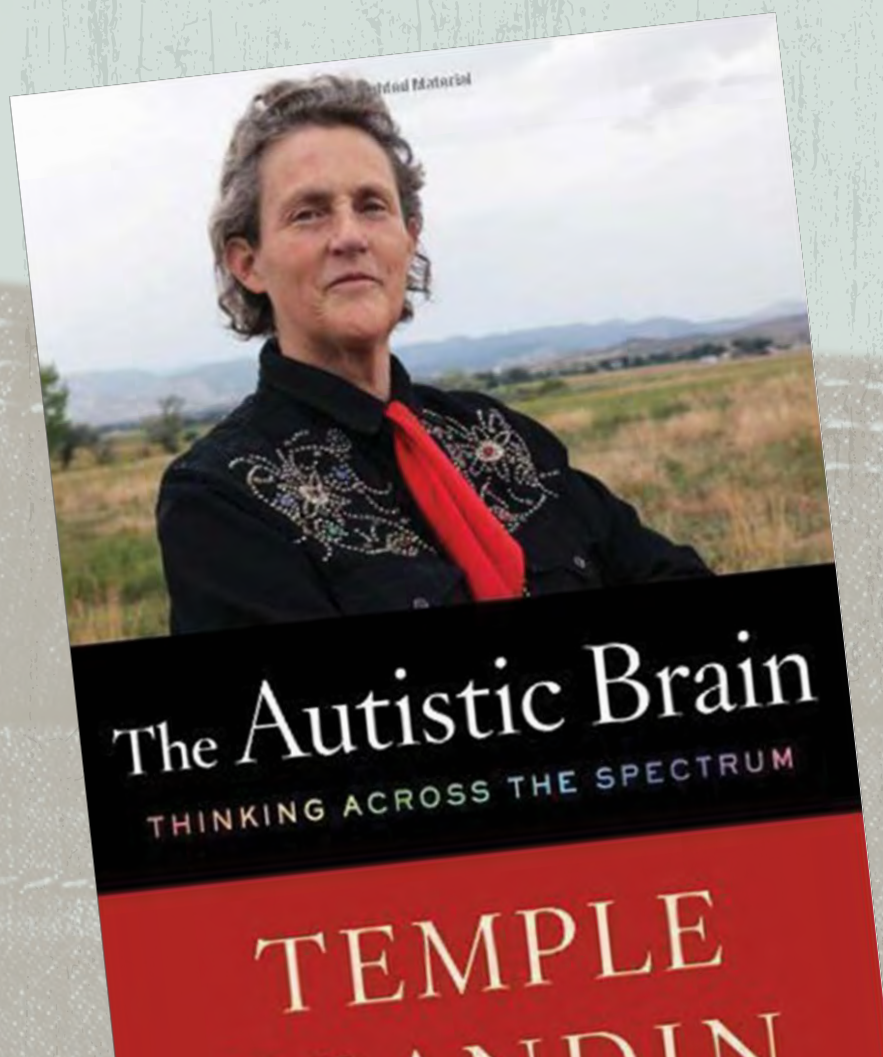
“Nature can be cruel, but we don’t have to be.”
— Temple Grandin

RESOURCES

Temple Grandin's website, including books, DVDs, and conference information. Learn more [here](#). >>

"The Autistic Brain" webinar with PresenceLearning, including over one hour of audience Q&A. Watch the webinar [here](#). >>

TED: *"The World Needs All Kinds of Minds"* Temple Grandin's TED Talk on different kinds of thinking. Watch her talk [here](#). >>



ABOUT CHANGING MINDS WEBINARS

Changing Minds is a three-part webinar series by PresenceLearning that provides education leaders critical insight on neurodevelopmental disorders and explores contemporary approaches for supporting and educating this growing population.

With the heightened sense of urgency given the shift to the Common Core State Standards and its emphasis on language and communications skills competency, school administrators, especially those responsible for special education, are working to adapt to the rise in cases of neurodevelopmental disorders in students. During the *Changing Minds* webinar series, three leading experts in childhood neurodevelopmental, behavioral and mental disorders — Dr. Temple Grandin, Dr. Barry Prizant and Dr. Jordan Wright — share their expertise, tackle common misconceptions, and provide educators with practical strategies to better manage challenges and help students succeed.

Watch all *Changing Minds* webinars [here](#). >>



ABOUT PRESENCELEARNING

PresenceLearning (www.presencelearning.com) is the leading provider of online speech and occupational therapy, counseling and assessments for K-12 districts and families of children with special needs. PresenceLearning's nationwide network includes hundreds of highly qualified speech language pathologists (SLPs), occupational therapists (OTs) and mental health professionals. Therapy sessions are delivered "anytime anywhere" via live videoconferencing using the latest in evidence-based practices combined with powerful progress reporting.

Serving thousands of students in public, charter and virtual schools across the U.S. and globally, PresenceLearning has shown that online delivery of related services is practical, convenient and highly effective.

How does online speech therapy, occupational therapy, and counseling work? Check out our videos [here](#). >>

