AMY: Thanks so much for coming. The DRC is really pleased to have BRAD BOARDMAN with us today. He's going to talk about how we can best work with students who are on the autism spectrum.

In 1995, a friend asked Brad to be a teacher at the Morgan Autism Center. He changed his career path and returned to school for an autism credential. He has a degree in English from Cal Poly. He has conducted numerous trainings for educators and reading skills and social stories, encouraging participation through student interests, strategies for behavior management, and the autism learning style. So it's our pleasure to have him here today. So please join me in welcoming him.

(AUDIENCE Clapping.)

BRAD BOARDMAN I will, I guess, talk a little bit about Morgan Autism Center where I work, just to give you a little bit of a background. We're what's known as a nonpublic school which means that we serve public school children and adults. We have an adult program as well, for those who aren't really making it in a public school setting. They are typically referred to as autistic for a couple of different reasons. They have severe behavior issues that are really problematic at a public school setting. Sometimes we have kids who come from districts that just don't have a program that's suitable. I'm gathering from the fact that you're here today, that working with these individuals can be a struggle. And figuring out is a struggle. Some don't have that programming available. And then sometimes we also get kids who come to us because their school district has fallen short on a contractual obligation. They all
have IEPs and they're falling short on services or something like that. The parents can ask for some other setting. So those are the reasons kids come to us.

One thing I'd like to do is pass around is the autism rates in the bay area. It's shocking to look at.

One of the reasons I pass out that newspaper photo is because it really details how the increase in autism has really tripled over the past ten years or so, essentially. What this means for you is that you're going to have more contact with these individuals and figure out how to serve them better. It's going to take a little bit of work to serve this population effectively. So pretty amazing slide, isn't it?

The things that we're going to talk about today, I'd like to go into some autism facts. It's basic stuff. We're not talking about the reasons for autism, what current thinking is, et cetera. I'm not a doctor. I'm not going to go into that kind of stuff too much; but what the prevalence is, et cetera. We're going to talk about how these individuals are affected. We're going to talk about social issues, communication issues, their repetitive or restricted interests, and the global impact of autism, centuries,*** and then we'll talk about how to be sensitive to these individuals, what might be helpful to implement.

Let's talk about the current statistic for autism. Right now, it's 1 out of 110 children. We heard a recent figure of 1 in 90. No one knows what the reasons for that are. But there is some*** current thinking about it. One of the metaphors that is being discussed lately to describe autism is that genetics load the gun and the environment pulls the trigger. So there
might be something between genetic predisposition and the environment. No facts have come out. It may turn out that there are a hundred different ways. It's something to think about. You've all heard that autism is a spectrum disorder. And really what that means is that on one end of the spectrum, you have individuals who are really cognitively affected socially, communication-wise. You have individuals who might not have any verbal language at all and really struggle with behavior issues. And then on the other end, you might have someone like Bill Gates. He might be on the spectrum. He's very high-functioning and directed. He knows what he wants and how to get there. In between is everyone else.

I think it's important to know that there are times when an individual, later*** on in life, might look like they're quite low on the spectrum and they slide up and gain some better functions about, some better social skills, communication skills, et cetera. Again, no one knows exactly, but I think it's really important to realize that there is room for improvement for all of these individuals. So something to keep in mind.

Boys are 4 to 5 times more likely to have autism as girls. And approximately 40 percent of individuals on the spectrum do not talk at all. This figure, I think, is shocking, too. 70 percent of all California individuals are under the age of 14. That means that you've got a wave looking for the college programming, living situations, jobs, all those things. So they're going to need some help on the other side.

I think this is really important for us to remember today. If you've seen one person with autism, you've seen one person with autism. They're all very different from one another.
They're so different that we sometimes struggle. I teach a
class at Santa Clara University with a colleague. And at the
end of our class this year, one of our students evaluated. "If
this, then this. Can you please just give us the answers."
Sometimes these guys defy answers. You have to figure out what
might be helpful and try different things to figure that out.

Let's talk about the social domain for a little bit. I
think this is one of the most perplexing around autism,
especially when it comes to friendships, relationships with
professors and family and with strangers on the street. These
guys really struggle with social relationships. They have a
difficult time reading body language. If I were to come to get
really close to someone, I would probably make them nervous.
And at a certain point, she would tip her chair backwards and
fall backwards because I'm really making her uncomfortable. But
these guys don't read these signals. So they need help with
that kind of thing.

They also have a difficult time acquiring the skills. I
have a really great example of that. If you're a man -- I'm
going to go into the bathroom talk here. If you're a man and
you go to the men's room and you have to urinate and you go to
the urinal and someone else comes in, our unstated social rules
say that they're going to be as far away from you as possible.
No one teaches that. But we abide by that. If you walked into
the bathroom and a man was standing at the urinal with his pants
around his ankles that would make you run out the door. So no
one teaches kids how to hold appropriately. If you're standing
at the urinal and someone peeks at you, that's a "no, no."
These individuals need to be taught these kinds of things.
Otherwise they're going to make those big mistakes. Individuals
with autism tend to have a really difficult time with social or emotional reciprocity. They all depend on this back-and-forth, right, I do something nice for you. Sometime later, you see something and say, "They would like that." That's a way of showing that you care for each other. And conversations have a really back-and-forth. Our kids don't understand the reciprocity of having a conversation.

I think just since being on campus this morning, I've heard a couple people tell me how difficult working in groups can be for individuals on this spectrum. Group dynamics are ever-changing. If you have someone who's rigid or wants to adhere to their way of doing things, then that's a hard situation. So those social interactions and groupings can be difficult for these individuals.

On the social scene, we also have individuals who quite often make statements that seem rude or blunt or just plain old mean. And I think it's really important for us to realize that they don't understand that what they're saying is mean necessarily, and they may need some training around that. I have a good example of a student of mine who I took to a recycling center. And the gentleman running it was very nice. But his teeth didn't look great. My student looked at him and said, "Man, your teeth are messed up." That's something I thought, but I knew well enough to keep that lid on it, just filter that stuff. You don't need to say everything that you see. My student didn't necessarily mean to be rude or mean. He was simply making an observation. So I had to go back to that student and say, "It's okay to notice those things, but you don't have to comment on all that." That's very difficult for
these individuals. And I can tell you, he didn't learn that lesson right away.

I think motivation is something I've also heard a bit about this morning. Individuals on the spectrum tend not to be motivated in the same ways we are. We are motivated by things like parent pressure, by teacher pressure, and all of these things mean a lot to us. We want to stay in people's good graces and those kinds of things. These people don't work in that kind of way. You're going to do better almost always if you figure out how to tap into a student interest rather than rely on them to feel pressure from you. Those personal interests are going to be extremely powerful in getting good work out of these individuals. They will eventually become motivated to please you, but I think it quite often needs to start with the student interest.

Sometimes individuals have difficulty with implied meanings. If I were to walk over to you here and say, "Somebody messed up," who am I talking about? Him. An individual may not understand that. So those implied meanings can be really difficult for these guys.

Changes can be really upsetting for an individual on the spectrum. We have a lot of kids at our school who are so rigid that a mother deviating on her route to school in the morning can send a kid into hysterics -- hitting slapping, et cetera, just because the routine has been interrupted.

So I think, we -- on one hand, we want individuals who are somewhat flexible. But on the other hand, I think it's really important to remember that routines are really important for these individuals. And if you can have standard rules or
routines that are clearly in your syllabus. You have a reading assignment every week and a paper due every week and everything looks the same, then you can do different activities or topics but the architecture is basically the same. Does that make sense?

We also have individuals who have a difficult time recognizing hierarchies. So when I talk to my college professor, I don't use street slang. I take my time. I do all the things that hierarchy demands of me. These guys may not understand that there's some kind of positioning issues going on. So they're likely to ask for things that, under a typical individual, might not ask for.

I think back to a documentary called "Today's Man." It's a great movie. And in this movie, it's about a 22-year-old who gets this job and he pulls something out of someone's mailbox to look at it and he has this conference with his supervisor about why he shouldn't do that kind of thing. After that, the appropriate response would be, okay. I'm not going to do it again. But instead, this guy says, now that's taken care of. I want to talk to you about reading "17 Magazine" at the desk. That's not something you would do with a supervisor. You should know that it's not appropriate to do that; so really disrespectful of that hierarchy.

We have individuals who don't recognize police. They may not respond to police in ways that they should. When a police officer tells me to do something, I do it because I know the consequences of that. These individuals may not recognize that.

In the communication domain, we have individuals who have a difficult time with the sustaining conversation -- again, that
reciprocity, that back-and-forth that really dictates conversation. What you get is the student who wants to tell you everything they're interested in. And they dominate class time. Those kinds of issues can be really difficult for these guys. Conversations really typically aren't two-way. It's more about interest and let me just tell you about what I want to talk about. They may also fail to respond to the comments of others unless addressed directly. So you need to make sure that you have their attention before you have a communication with an individual with autism.

Or some of our individuals have an interesting way with coping with stress and anxiety and those kinds of things. One of these things is we have individuals at our school who will repeat things from TV or movies or music or pieces or whatever. It is when they become really stressed. If you give one of our students, Chris, a directive, he'll blurt out something about Fruity Pebbles. It has nothing to do with the direction, but that's his way of coping. I've learned to recognize that I better do something to help him along and alleviate some of that anxiety. I don't know if you have individuals like that who have interesting ways of using language, but those uses don't always have a meaning other than, "I'm anxious. I need some help here." They don't know how to ask appropriately. They may have an unusual way of speaking -- robotic or those kinds of things. It's important to know that they have processing delays. They hear all the words that we're saying, but it takes as while to digest them. It would be helpful to give some direction to help them digest. But also, time can be really helpful. So we all have conferences where they're surprised and we walk away from them saying I should have said this or that.
Your processing is delayed because you're stressed and can't formulate the appropriate response. These guys feel like that all the time, I would say. Give them visual information and other ways for them to understand what you're asking of them. That would be really important. They're quite often challenged to repair their communications. Your know, if I ask someone a question and they don't understand me and I ask it the same way again and they still don't understand me, then I'm going to do something different so that I'm more easily understood. These individuals are often challenged to repair those communications. So that's a very difficult issue with them. Again, your patience is going to be necessary. Oftentimes, they can be quite patient. So stick with it and they can figure it out. Sometimes it can feel like, would this person please get to their point, they're circuitous. Please tell me, what do you need. You can sometimes help that along by asking, interrupt. You might have to interrupt and ask some pointed questions to get at the information you need.

For kids who are lower on the spectrum, generally, the communication issues can be kind of the reason for behavior issues. If you don't know how to communicate and ask for what you want or make changes, that's a recipe for frustration, right? I think that can be true for individuals who seem to be higher on the spectrum. Slang language can be really difficult. I have an example of, one of our adults who really has a difficult time with metaphorical language, I made the mistake of -- she was very upset about something that had occurred in class that day. And the director of the program came in and said, let's look at it on the bright side. You get to go to P.E. for longer today. And I turned to my student and said, "Do
you think that Sue's glass is half full or half empty?" And my student looked around and said, "I don't think that's Sue's glass." So to shy away from that even if it's fun. Being more concrete and more directive can really help get your point across.

Quite often you have individuals who have all-encompassing interests. And so figure out ways to include their interests or their focus, et cetera. It's not always going to be possible. I mean I've had students who are interested in HVAC controls and air conditioning and heating. And you can't bring it into everything in the classroom. But to the degree that you can, I think it's really important to include those interests as much as possible. And also in the self-soothing realm, you have individuals who, the world is an anxiety-provoking place. They are look for ways to self-soothe. And we've seen kids who rock and tap on tables and do all kinds of annoying things unless you understand what they're doing in an attempt to soothe themselves. There's this concept called "local coherence" that I think is a really nice way of thinking about this. If I can tap on this podium and my attention is here, then I can block everything else out because I'm concentrated on this. And it makes it much easier for me to share space with other people if I can concentrate on that. We all do that. My wife gets on my case all the time. I do it at the dinner table. We all do those kinds of things, but they're not always displayed as prevalently as these individuals tend to do it.

Sometimes, on the self-soothing things, you can work with a student to find something that's less distracting for others. If you can do that and still have them be able to be in your class and pay attention to a certain degree, that can be really
helpful. But it will take some conversations like, "Hey, what can we do to help you but also help you to be in the class with us?" We have individuals who are quite often preoccupied with the parts of things. We have kids at our school, when I talked about the controls, he was only interested on the thermostat on the wall. Or we have kids who are really into wheels and watch the wheels go. Oftentimes, those preoccupations with parts or qualities of objects are sensory in nature. Okay? It's fun to spin a wheel and watch it spin around. It does something for them.

Quite often they have excellent memory for details. And you can sometimes use that to your advantage. But not all the time. Their interests are so specific that you may not be able to channel that very well. We have an individual in our adult program who will ask you what day you were born and he'll tell you what day of the week it fell on. And he'll cross-reference that with other people he knows. Pretty amazing and yet there's challenges in so many ways. But he has this skill in this area and struggles with other things.

Oftentimes, we have kids at our school -- and I know this is true for higher-functioning individuals -- again, going back to that self-soothing things. Sometimes we have kids who want to hold onto something all the time. I think of it like a teddy bear for a two-year-old or 3-year-old. It makes them feel comfortable or something like that. It could be a pen or a Koosh ball or something like an iPhone. But oftentimes, they have an attachment that helps them get through things. So to be understanding of that and realize that they may be holding something, hopefully it's unobtrusive. We've had kids who come in with a coat hanger and want to hold on to it all day. I
don't know what's comfortable about that. But if it helped him through the day, that works for us. I think this is one of the most fun topics to talk about for me when it comes to autism. I think it's so apparent.

AUDIENCE: Can we ask questions?

BRAD BOARDMAN: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: So I was with students 1 or 2 times. So if you just had maybe 4 or 5 tips that you would give to counselors or even to professors, what can we do with a student who is on the spectrum to put them at ease quickly?

BRAD BOARDMAN: Let's talk at the end of the talk. I might be able to give you something. I do have some pages. I think, again, these guys are all individual. What's going to work for one won't work for another. It's going to take a little bit of investment or time to establish rapport, to figure that out. I wish I could give you -- here they are. But it's a little complicated.

AUDIENCE: Our staff may not have the time to make that investment, so just thinking about something that might be small that may not work for everyone, but --

BRAD BOARDMAN: When an individual comes to you, what is the reason for them coming to you for the most --

AUDIENCE: Getting ready for the interview, career development, interaction with the employer. And sometimes those appointments can be exhausting because it might take 25 minutes to have a dialogue to talk about, strengths, or how to answer a question about themselves.
BRAD BOARDMAN: I do have a great book here by Temple Grandin. I think that would be a really good resource for you. There are a lot of tips around those things that would be helpful to you. Okay? But at the end, we may touch on some of those as well. So executive functions is the capacity to control our attention and focus, to draw on past experiences, to inform what we're going to do in the future, et cetera. We all as neurotypical individuals have this capacity. We use it all the time. When I came here today, I wanted to have some contingency plans in place in case my Powerpoint plan didn't work. So I brought my computer and my hard copy. I brought all these things. I don't want to be left in the lurch here without my Powerpoint. So drawing on past experience where things haven't worked on a technical side, I was able to make a plan. These guys really have a difficult time with that planning and organizing part.

When I was a middle school student, we had a student who was on the spectrum. And he was different-looking because he dressed different than everyone else. He had "high water" pants and he was a target. And everyone knew how to get him upset and they would mercilessly tease this kid as he walked through the quad every day. And it took literally 30 seconds for him to get to the point where he was swinging at people and trying to hurt people because of the bullying. Now, if one of us were that middle school kid, I bet the next day, we'd do something really different. We'd go around the quad or make a plan to avoid that situation. But this guy kept making the same mistake over and over and over again. Of course, there were some mistakes being made elsewhere as well, right -- sensitivity training, et cetera. That's a demonstration of their inability make changes
and plan for problems and correct things a little bit. And that's true for classes, right? You have to plan for certain issues and know what's coming up and how to plan your time effectively, et cetera. Executive functioning allows us to put ourselves in the future, be flexible, understand rules, changes, inhibit responses. That student who said, "Your teeth are messed up," he didn't have that executive functioning feature.

It also allows us to make hierarchical lists to prioritize incoming stimuli. We have students at our school who have a difficult time if they're doing something they're really interested in and a fire alarm goes off. We as individuals, fire alarm has priority over everything. These guys get so locked in, they're not prioritizing and acting accordingly. That's really a challenge for these guys.

Quite often we have kids who have a rich interior life, meaning daydreaming and not attending. So to understand that about some of these individuals and figure out ways to draw them in, oftentimes by providing visual information, those kinds of things can be very helpful.

Cause and effect can be difficult. Learning from mistakes can be difficult. Oftentimes, these individuals know that they've made a mistake and need to do things differently, but they can't plan things differently. So your challenge can be to have them recognize they've made a mistake and plan a way of doing things differently. I always think, and our philosophy is that these guys are neurologically different than us. We need to help them. It's not because they're mean or because they should know better. They struggle with these issues, so it's our job to give them information they need and give them strategies that can be helpful.
AUDIENCE: So this comes up in our work too. Do you have any tips on how to help on the spectrum with empathy and the emotional aspects? But also, I made a mistake in the past saying, "If you were in the employer's shoes," and that didn't work. And I'm not sure to what degree empathy --

BRAD BOARDMAN: That is a real struggle for these individuals. Theory of mind is something that we'll touch on in a minute. I think to know that it's a struggle is a big deal. Just to know that these guys have a difficult time with that is going to help you a bit. They may have difficulty generalizing skills. They may learn something. They might learn -- what is a dog? A German Shepherd is a dog. But when you see a Chihuahua, is that a dog? We know it is. But if you talk to Temple Grandin, she didn't understand that a German Shepherd is a dog and a Lab is a dog and a Poodle is a dog. She had to make some rule to know it was a dog. Is that a dog or is that a cat? We know. So generalizing those concepts can be really hard and you may have to find ways to help them come up with rules so they can generalize things and look at certain situations and say "Yes, it's this," or "no, it's not this."

Central coherence is a difficult concept for these individuals as well. Basically, it means seeing the whole picture, really understanding the cohesive hold. We -- as a really simple example, our school has kids who are working on things like just basic hygiene like washing hands. We all know as neurotypicals that there are reasons, really great reasons for washing your hands, right? It gets rid of germs, our hands are stinky and filthy, and et cetera. These guys have learned the steps, but they haven't figured out the reasons. They don't understand the whole concept. So we have quite a few kids at
our school who will do things like understand the steps, get some soap, rinse the soap off their hands without rubbing them together, go grab a towel, and throw the towel away. They have the steps but they're not doing the actual thing. They don't have a cohesive understanding of why we wash hands.

So steps are easy to teach but the reasoning behind them can be really difficult for these guys. Does that make sense? Theory of mind is perspective taking, essentially, being able to understand that others have different thoughts and ideas from us. And this is a real challenge for individuals on the spectrum. They are likely to assume that you know things that they really should be telling you about. They might launch into a story midway through the story because they assume that you know what happened in the past. An example of that is, we have an adult who is very social and will come over to you. If I tour a group of visitors through our school, she'll come over to us and say, "Mr. Boardman, I had a really mischievous boy in bed with me this morning." And people's eyes get huge. I understand that she meant her cat. But she didn't give us those crucial background details. It's an incomplete picture. That has to do with theory of mind. You need certain pieces of information to really understand what's going on.

It also makes it difficult to compromise. These individuals will often adhere to their rules or the way it's supposed to be done -- dynamic changes. We have individual who is, thinks that things should go a certain way. When it starts going differently, that's a real problem. I'm my own person. I'm going to say what I'm going to say. But they have difficulties with theory of mind. They don't understand that we have thoughts and ideas that are our own.
Asperger's Syndrome, I'm not going to talk much about that. Because the differences are very few and sometimes hard to tease out. But for the most part, they share the same social issues and the restricted or repetitive interests. They quite often are pretty good with the communication piece but still they struggle with that as well. Language abilities are good but the cognitive function is affected. But they can be high IQ and quite bright, but they think differently from a neurotypical individual.

Associated symptoms and diagnoses, I think that's important to realize that these guys can be struggling with multiple things -- hyperactivity, impulsivity. You have to realize that's part of the executive functioning, right. We all have a filter that keeps us from acting that way mostly, but these guys have a difficult time inhibiting those impulses. Anxiety can be an issue -- affective instability. There's really radical mood swings sometimes. And the most common comorbid diagnosis is ADHD and depression, especially for individuals who are higher on the spectrum. They are a little bit more aware of, what am I missing out on. I see social relationships all around me. Why can't I seem to manage a successful social relationship? So that can be a real issue for adults and adolescents.

I skipped that slide, but I'll go back to the seizure activities. I think it's important to know that if individuals may have some seizure disorder and to realize that when they're stressed or anxious, the likelihood of a seizure goes up. We have to be cognizant of that and keeping things on an even keel.

Quite often, sensory issues come up. I see someone nodding. Have you seen a sensory issue?
AUDIENCE: My daughter is high on the spectrum, and she's really high on the sensory.

BRAD BOARDMAN: Temple Grandin, who designs all kinds of interesting and scientific machinery and so on, has some real sensory issues. She has sensitivity to things like clothing — you know, kids that tear out all the tags. And we have kids who have the shirts that have no seam down the side because that seam can be a problem. We have kids who will not wear pants no matter how cold it gets because the material on their calves can be a problem for them.

Sensitivity to lights and noise. Fluorescent bulbs, I've heard, can look like a strobe light to an individual on the spectrum. To be aware of that, like noise, lighting, et cetera, I think can help you make changes in your classrooms, et cetera to accommodate, hopefully. No one likes to be in a darkened room. Sometimes they have an increased or decreased pain threshold.

I think, now we're into the tips and suggestions and how to be sensitive and that kind of stuff. I think the eye contact issue, that's a really important thing. We expect people to give us eye contact. But that's really tricky, too. If I give you eye contact and look at you like this.

(Indicating.)

BRAD BOARDMAN: That makes you really uncomfortable. It's fleeting. I touch on people's faces and then I move onto something else. All those things together equal, I'm paying attention to you as a group, et cetera. But you have to be really careful about insisting on eye contact with individuals. Because what you're likely to get is that intense, I'm burning a
hole through your forehead. But it doesn't necessarily mean that if you get that eye contact, you're getting better attention. They are overwhelmed by things and it might be too much for them to look at you in the face or eyes and also listen to the words that you're saying. So give them a break a little bit on that. I know culture thinks you're guilty of something. But to be open-minded about eye contact is really important. We have to make a little bit of a cultural adjustment to accommodate these guys, right?

Make sure you allow for processing time. These individuals typically do need more time to think about things, to process things, et cetera. You want to tap into interests as I said. Be sensitive to self-soothing behaviors. Keep your language concrete. I really do love word play and that kind of stuff. But it can be confounding when you speak in metaphorical language all the time to them. It can be really difficult. It's like Amelia Bedelia books. It can be really difficult. It's not true of all individuals. I met some who love word play and are quite good at it so I'm making generalizations here. Make sure you're being clear. Give visual support using charts, graphs, organizers, things like throwing up an agenda for every night's class. From 9:15 to 9:40, we're doing this, can help you stay on track, especially with those individuals who want to dominate your time. It's like, we need to move on. We're going past our time slot here. So if you want to talk to me later, we can have a private conversation about things. I think that's a challenge for all of us, those individuals who raise their hand and want to participate all the time. It's like, I'm having a class with one individual. We have to really be cognizant of
the whole group and move through the class and hopefully get through things in a very functional and thorough way.

I think it's important to model calm behavior, especially when you sense an individual who is anxious. You set the tone for those individuals quite often. Speak in a calm voice, don't get frustrated. You're going to get frustrated because of those social things that come up -- the rudeness. Be patient and not show your frustration. Be neutral tone rather than an angry tone. You're going to bump up against individuals who make the same mistakes over and over again. When you recognize that, it's time to step in and help them figure out how to make an alternate plan.

Going back to the rapport thing, it's true, it's going to be difficult to accomplish rapport with people. There's not enough time. But whatever you can do is going to help them. You may have to help individuals learn to prioritize things. When you're looking at the class syllabus, there are things that you need to get on right away and there are things that you can wait a little bit with. So if you see an individual who is having a difficult time getting assignments in or doesn't seem to know how to organize it all, you can help with that.

I think, given a syllabus, you might have an actual calendar that says, on this day we're doing X, Y, and Z. And on Thursday, we're doing the D, E, F. That can be helpful. Use lists, agendas, outlines. I think building strong routines is really important, too. I touched on this already. If you're teaching a class, I think the overall architecture of the class should be the same from week to week or class to class. I think that can be helpful for them. Make sure your syllabus is correct. They're going to find your mistakes. Neurotypical
individuals are also going to be stressed by mistakes or inconsistencies in your syllabus. Take that extra time and make sure you're feeling comfortable about how the assignments are going to play out.

When you're talking about individuals on the spectrum, I think it's really important to use "people first" language instead of "autistics" or something like that. This is a person with autism. If you came in to me and you had a rash, I wouldn't call you "rashy."

AUDIENCE: Can you go back to the previous slide?

BRAD BOARDMAN: Sure.

AUDIENCE: The sensitive behavior and what your experience has been with that and why you think that's important?

BRAD BOARDMAN: Is this a loaded question?

AUDIENCE: I think, in the experience in working with individuals with Asperger's, that's very prevalent. They do experience a lot of bullying and sensitive behavior. So this is important for us to be mindful of that and how that affects their, I guess, their executive functioning.

BRAD BOARDMAN: So going back to my example about middle school, it has become very apparent to me over the years that this school really failed the individual on the spectrum and also us. They didn't give us any training around that. I think a little sensitivity training goes a long way. We have -- at our school we have what we call "reverse mainstreaming" program. We have private school kids come to us from Harker Academy and other private schools in the area. And it's been
really neat to go to those schools and, before they come onto our school campus, do a very shortened version of Autism 101 for them so they understand what the issues are. They're bright kids, capable of understanding all of these things. But to provide that sensitivity training is really important. It lets these kids participate in a way with kids who were on the spectrum. That is very positive. I think that's really important.

Individuals on the spectrum are just easy targets for bullying because they're rigid. They have difficulties with executive functions and they're likely to do the same things over and over again. All those neurotypical kids who might engage in that bullying behavior, it's like, you're easy, I can figure out easily how to get your goat and swing your backpack around.

To me, the importance is around sensitivity training. Know how to get the word out in an efficient way about sensitivity training. But I think there are things on campus here that would promote that sensitivity. It's been hypothesized that Silicon Valley is full of people on the spectrum. They're very directed individuals who know exactly what they want and can look at a page of 0s and 1s and say, don't you see the mistake there? Because of that, I think as a community, we need to be really aware of that and teach that as well. Have you run onto something on campus here where you suspected bullying was going on?

AUDIENCE: I work in the counselling services. And I have a number of students who are on the spectrum. And I know that they have -- there's a commonality in which they've been bullied. It does affect their coping mechanism of how they deal
with stressful situations. And so, and how they get that safety for themselves. So I think that, when you're slide says be sensitive and helpful, I think that's an important thing to think about. A lot of these individuals who fall under that spectrum do experience bullying and insensitive behavior. And that can affect their way of coping and managing through society.

**BRAD BOARDMAN:** Can I ask, are you seeing actual examples, or are you talking about previous experience coming into this setting?

**AUDIENCE:** I'm talking more about previous experience. But bullying occurs in any environment, whether it's in a school setting or work setting or whatever it may be. It does occur. And how we manage that individually, we have our own coping mechanism. With these individuals they may experience it more directly and intensely.

**BRAD BOARDMAN:** I think one of the challenges for you would be how do I get the word out and teach that in an efficient way so that I reach a maximum number of students. I'm not sure what the answer is for that. But maybe we can talk afterwards. I really don't, I don't know what the most efficient way to do that training would be. But I think it's necessary, absolutely. And it's really a shame that some of that hasn't gone on in earlier grades. The educational system is, tries to do some mainstreaming and so on. But there's not enough training. I think we don't seem to believe that students can handle the information. And I think they can, you know? So something to talk about for sure.
Some of the resources I think would be really interesting for you, some of them are books. "Beyond the Wall" is written by Stephen Shore. He writes about his experiences. He's been a speaker at our university. He's very interesting to listen to. Temple Grandin, you've probably all heard of her. But I think this one in particular is probably most directed at your issues here. There's a boy in here, is written from the perspective of a mother and a son who is on the spectrum, someone who seems to have slid up the spectrum a little bit -- and from quite low-functioning to someone who is doing really well.

This next one, "Today's Man," is one of my absolute favorite documentaries. I think it would be really nice for you to look at that, given the conversation we've had about executive functioning and so on. It's a documentary again, about a 22-year-old who is struggling with the social issues, with the communication issues. He's very bright and yet you see this guy bump up against problem after problem. It's interesting to look at it and get another, sort of -- it's nice to log more time seeing these individuals. You're going to bump up with individuals here. But to see others who have struggled with the same kinds of things can help you sort of categorize things and say, oh, this person could use this or that will.

"Parents Helping Parents" is a resource for anyone. Socialthinking.com is, I don't know if you've all heard of her. She does a lot of training of individuals who are higher on the spectrum, younger for the most part. She's done a lot of work in regard to that. At Morgan Autism Center, we do have a conference and a lecture series in the spring. You can look us up and see if there's anything of interest to you. We're also starting a class for individuals who are higher on the spectrum.
It's about social thinking and how to cope with social issues, et cetera. Mostly, we're serving young kids here now, but we're hoping to roll out another program. There's one more -- "Evolibro." It's one by a woman named Jan, "Mother's Guide to Asperger's Syndrome."

AUDIENCE: As students in the adult education program, are any of them working?

BRAD BOARDMAN: Again, we tend to serve these individuals who need more assistance than those higher functioning individuals. We do have a job on campus. But for the most part, no. They're not working at 9:00 to 5:00 jobs at Trader Joe's or something like that. Their employment is typically a few hours here and there and what they can tolerate.

AUDIENCE: That's what we're seeing, more and more students on the spectrum getting ready for the real world and not having enough on how to really help the population thrive. A lot of suggestions that you had were great suggestions. With employers, they don't have to create that kind of culture, that kind of environment. So how do we get them onboard to help these students work hard to get their degrees?

BRAD BOARDMAN: It is tough. I've mentioned Trader Joe's only because I just heard that they received an award for working with individuals with developmental disabilities, including autism. There are some companies who make a direct effort to be sensitive to those kinds of things. I don't know what kind of flexibility you have, but to realize the motivation issues are a real problem. And an eight-hour job is really tough for these guys, for the most part. There are plenty who do work eight hours. But maybe you can put something with
multiple jobs or the same job in different places. Give them breaks and those kinds of things can be helpful.

**AUDIENCE:** Intergender relationships, man-woman. I know everybody wants to meet somebody. Is this more of a problem if someone is challenged socially?

**BRAD BOARDMAN:** Yes. It really is a challenge.

**AUDIENCE:** My student says, "I want a girlfriend. How do I get a girlfriend?" I suggested he take a dance class.

**AUDIENCE:** I was going to follow up. The students said they do sign up with the dance class and it has the reverse effect. They're not picked as an individual and everybody else is grouped. So it actually is sometimes more hurtful to them. They become upset and yet they know on the concrete end, they're being graded and they have to get this dance partner. So we get the faculty member input.

**AUDIENCE:** My student is so sweet and he held out his hands and said, "May I have this dance?" I said okay. Do you have any ideas?

**BRAD BOARDMAN:** It's a problem. I mean, when you're talking about persons who have difficulty with that reciprocity, the back and forth, that is really necessary for successful social relationships. It's going to be a challenge for them.

**AUDIENCE:** So there's so many options online now. There's got to be an online dating service.

**BRAD BOARDMAN:** There may be.

**AUDIENCE:** Are there any online communities that you know of?
BRAD BOARDMAN: I wish I -- you might want to contact me by e-mail. It's brad@morgancenter.org.

AUDIENCE: I have an idea -- board games. Men are good if they're working with their hands. You can always have a great relationship with someone if they're working under their car. So chess or --

BRAD BOARDMAN: I think clubs. If you find someone with a similar interest, then that's an easy way in. So it's true for us to a certain degree but even more so for someone on the spectrum. So if there's a chess club or Star Trek club. Those can be a way in to a social relationship.

AUDIENCE: I really appreciate your comment, the reverse effect.

AUDIENCE: There is a disabled association. You don't have to have a disability to belong to that. So certainly we can give you that information on how to connect with the president.

AUDIENCE: Maybe the student doesn't know they are.

BRAD BOARDMAN: That happens quite often.

AUDIENCE: Remember, it's just for social activity. So you can approach it that way.

BRAD BOARDMAN: Did you have a question?

AUDIENCE: I was going to add to the discussion that the literature on people with disabilities, whether it's emotional or physical or cognitive, shows that 95 percent of them are not successful at maintaining and getting married. But they can be successful if they're using a variety of activity, whether it's clubs or so forth.
AUDIENCE: So 95 percent do not get married.

AUDIENCE: That's the latest I've seen, yes, unfortunately.

AUDIENCE: I have a question for Cindy because we've been exchanging voice mails about this. You had mentioned that a lot of students who come in don't self-identify as autistic so it's hard to funnel them into the resources that are on campus. So we may make the observation that they are on this spectrum at this point in time. What kinds of things can we do for them or suggest for them as far as transitioning into college life if they're having trouble with that adjustment?

AUDIENCE: We actually, so many faculty call DRC and they say, "I have a student doing..." and they'll tell us what they're doing, Asperger's is the big word being thrown around. And we talk to them to see if the student is not self-identifying. We'll make suggestions based on that. But we'll always tell the faculty member, refer to the student to the DRC for support and services. It's so minimal on campus right now. It's a "perk" in a way. When we get with the student behind closed doors, we can draw out information from them and give them better direction. And hopefully, if they would benefit from registering with us, then we can get them to register with us and get them down that path to work with them. It's been very difficult for us at DRC as well a lot of the students are keeping things close to the chest, if you will -- euphemisms. They come in with this feeling that they're different and they're no longer in high school. So they don't want to be seen as that anymore. We talk about how the university is different from high school and how we can help them and the benefits to registering with us and socializing
with the students who have the disability. We try everything we can. There's no magic pill, unfortunately. It really is case-by-case and student-by-student. They're so unique in their needs that that's how we look at each student who walks in the door. And we approach it from that. Even from the first meeting with Susan, we see which direction she should take that student -- counselling upstairs or to someplace on campus. It is time-consuming.

AUDIENCE: So Susan is the person we should communicate with? I want to give you my "heads up?"

AUDIENCE: You can call any one of the counselors. Whenever it's necessary, we'll let Susan and Sofia know to expect a scheduled appointment, and please make sure they see this person. There may be a specific reason you're calling. So any one of us, whichever is quicker for you. Thank you.

BRAD BOARDMAN: I wanted to mention really quickly groupings and group assignments. I know that's an issue. And I think you need to be aware of the individual who might be on the spectrum. But I think also it might be helpful for you to be careful about what kind of students you're grouping together. So one who might be on the spectrum would probably do well with someone who's got all that social stuff in place because those are the people who are going to give the most flexibility and not get into battles. There's people who have a really developed EQ. You're going to be tapping into those individuals who you have or feel are really***.

AUDIENCE: Do you have any comments or advice for dealing with parents and their expectations for their kids?
It's a really difficult situation I had. I had an experience with a student and his parent recently. And I thought the conversation went really well. And then a couple of e-mails later, it was, like, a real disconnect.

BRAD BOARDMAN: I think a little bit of maybe sensitivity on our part, too in regard to parents. We often forgot that parents are really coping with a diagnosis eight years later, 20 years later, 30 years later. That's a journey. Parents may still be holding on to their ideas of what it's supposed to be or what they thought it was supposed to be and they're going to have difficulty around, what are the real struggles for my student. So being sensitive to that stuff and being patient.

AUDIENCE: It's difficult to have a conversation about reasonable expectations, at least as you've seen them. I mean, I can't imagine dealing with this. It's a difficult situation but --

BRAD BOARDMAN: Can you give me a little more info?

AUDIENCE: I can say one thing. This parent seems to think that this student is going to be able to go to medical school. And that might be. I don't know. But the struggle in getting through upper division classes is -- that require a lot of socialization in labs in the biology department, is a real challenge for this student. And it's a struggle for the instructors to get them through this and the coming up against really challenging coursework at this point and I don't know whether it will work or not.

AUDIENCE: I was going to comment on that. I'm thinking about what is our role as faculty? Are we just helping
them adapt, or are we preparing them for the real world. Where is that? How much am I going to adapt for that individual first in a classroom of a hundred? And are we preparing them to deal? If we don't give them some of those boundaries that they can adapt to when they get out with this degree --

**BRAD BOARDMAN:** It's not going to help them at all. I think you have to figure out that balance. How much can we accommodate? I think what I would say is, give some accommodation and some help upfront. And then hopefully back out of the picture a bit once they get the routine established and that kind of thing. Of course, these guys are taking different courses every semester. It's not, hey, I'm going to school and have the same teacher for three years and figure out the expectations. The more clear and concrete you can be upfront and the more kind of visual information you can give to help them meet their obligations and know exactly what the expectations are, the better. It's true when they get out in the world, they've got to navigate.

**AUDIENCE:** The challenge is that you're literally dealing with explosive situations.

**BRAD BOARDMAN:** You're talking about chemistry.

**AUDIENCE:** Chemistry or pathogenic? You have to take those into account. I can see faculty trying to make accommodations, but it's difficult.

**BRAD BOARDMAN:** I don't know the structure of the university here enough to figure out where -- I wish I could tell you, you know, to talk to so-and-so.

**AUDIENCE:** I'm talking to people.
AUDIENCE: And the DRC. The other thing I wanted to -- the DRC is experiencing the student on the disorder spectrum. But their parent is also on that. And we are challenged with dealing with mom and dad or mom or dad. And the student sits there and the mom and dad do all the speaking. They're critical and concrete, inflexible because the previous institution of education did this for them. And that's typically not a higher ed. It's typically secondary ed. So we're having to educate the parent as we're going along and also educating them. When they're not happy with DRC in how we're trying to work with them, they step out of that and send e-mails that are literally six pages long which are inappropriate. And this is not 1 or 2 parents. This is numbers of parents. It's become --

BRAD BOARDMAN: Snowball.

AUDIENCE: Yeah. We're trying very hard and doing exactly what you're saying, educating the parent and the student and their different roles. But this has become very challenging because it's not only time-consuming, but it's imperative that we meet timelines. The university is not flexible with timelines. So we've been experiencing this for a couple years, 59 least.

AUDIENCE: 3 or 4.

BRAD BOARDMAN: I mean, they're all individual kids. They're all, that's what makes it great and also so difficult. But I think from DRC's perspective, if there were a way for you to write down, given DRC's assistance, you still have to be able to do X, Y, and Z. Maybe they're not helping you, but there are still things that you have to do. Sorry. It's not an excuse.
It's, we're going to accommodate and help you get through it, but you also have to be a part of that meeting obligations and being safe and those kinds of things.

**AUDIENCE:** Because the statistic of 70 percent of all who have autism, are you seeing any policy changes and system changes in the K through 12 system?

**BRAD BOARDMAN:** In California?

**AUDIENCE:** Yeah.

**BRAD BOARDMAN:** That's a good question. I wouldn't say so, that I'm seeing anything. Understand that I'm my own little corner on a nonpublic school campus. The other is, again, we're dealing with individuals and the spectrum is wide and broad. And there are plenty of kids who are mainstream and they do really well in many, many areas but have a challenge here or there. And there are others who just need to, being in any kind of a mainstream area is difficult. Policy-wise in California, I can't think of anything off the top of my head that sticks out for me. I do know that budgetary wise, there are immense issues in California. And it looks like the regional centers who provide funding for programs like ours are looking at -- I think last year they dropped funding by four percent and they're going to do another couple percent change this year. It's like, how do you do that? There's nothing there.

**AUDIENCE:** You're talking about, I was going to comment that there's not a lot of policies, but the medical system has really improved as far as getting a diagnosis. And the resources, that's improved greatly other the last 14 years.
BRAD BOARDMAN: It looks like medical insurance is going to be responsible for paying for some interventions. So I think we're talking about younger kids for the most part. But that could be helpful.

AUDIENCE: So you're talking about concrete, factual. What about study guides? Can this person study for an exam and pass it on their own using, say, Powerpoint and other examples? Do they require, or will they -- are we serving them better if we give them study guides?

BRAD BOARDMAN: I would say it would be helpful.

AUDIENCE: Well, it would be helpful for everybody.

BRAD BOARDMAN: Again, we're talking about individuals who vary widely. Some won't need a study guide. If they like biology, they'll be teaching you and reading the book back and forth.

AUDIENCE: So if you don't give -- if you give the information concretely in various ways, with examples, you avoid metaphors, will they survive? Do they have the necessary skills to pass the exam without handing them the exam?

BRAD BOARDMAN: It's case-by-case. In my class at Santa Clara University, I've had a few individuals who are on the spectrum. A couple have done really well and others need much more assistance. I'm sorry. I wish I could give you --

AUDIENCE: That's helpful. Thank you. Every individual is different, so you might as well do it.

BRAD BOARDMAN: If you think it's going to help a neurotypical person, it's going to help a person on the
spectrum. It's good management if you're an employee to be able to say, you need to do this and this.

AUDIENCE: But the thing is, if you're a visual person, there's different ways to learn visually, right. The feedback that I'm getting is, if they outline a chapter by hand, it sticks better in the brain. It goes in the hand. Because they're outlining with their pencil and their pen and it goes up with the arm and in the brain and sticks. If I give them too much help, I think that can be bad, too.

BRAD BOARDMAN: Yeah. And you don't want to create individuals who need help all the time.

AUDIENCE: I totally agree with you.

BRAD BOARDMAN: Autonomy is important.

AUDIENCE: I was just, quick question. Do you think that the numbers are the way they are from 2002 to 2010 based on the fact that genetics -- or really just the more awareness of autism, I mean, in terms of culture?

BRAD BOARDMAN: Can I say yes, maybe? I think it's possible that we are -- again, going back to my middle school example, that individual was never identified as being on the spectrum. But in hindsight, I can say, oh, yeah. That guy was definitely on the spectrum. I think we've gotten better at recognizing what kids are struggling with early on in identifying autism and spectrum disorders. It also seems to me that the prevalence is going up. And I wish I knew why. It's spooky. Another metaphor, someone described kids with autism as possibly being the "canary in the coal mine." So maybe something environmentally is going on here. We're seeing it play out with more sensitive research.
AUDIENCE: As an image, I always think of an example for myself. I was out in Florida and my friend said, "Look at the Heron over there." And she said, "underneath the tree over there." And I went, oh. And then I saw Herons everywhere.

BRAD BOARDMAN: Any other questions or comments? I'd like to hear from you.