

This booklet contains research-based social-script strategies for addressing social, communication, and behavioral skills in individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Specifically, we provide a description of and research support for each strategy, an explanation of how to implement each strategy, and examples of how the strategies may be implemented across individuals of varying ages and abilities. The strategies covered in this manual include visually represented scripts, stories, and rules. Each is a strategy that requires only basic training to implement correctly, little money and materials, and little time to implement. We believe such strategies are among those most likely to be used by practitioners and those that will most likely be implemented correctly.

Additionally, the strategies presented in this booklet are all visually based. That is, each provides the individual with ASD with a picture or written words to clarify instruction. Such visual prompts may be more effective and less invasive than verbal cues. For example, a visual script that a student with ASD can refer to when unsure of an appropriate social greeting serves as a self-prompt, rather than one delivered by a teacher or parent. Such self-provided prompts may be less socially stigmatizing than verbal reminders given by adults or companions when in the presence of peers. Several experts in autism have proposed that individuals with ASD are primarily visual learners (Bryan & Gast, 2000; Simpson, Myles, & Ganz, in press). Hodgdon (1995) suggested that individuals with ASD have difficulty focusing on and comprehending auditory information. She recommended using visual supports and prompts instead of or in combination with auditory information to augment expressive- and receptive-language skills. This approach is thought to ameliorate deficits in attention, memory, organization, language, prompt dependency, and intrinsic motivation that are common in autism (Schopler, Mesibov, & Hearsey, 1995). Benefits of visual supports for individuals with ASD include increased joint attention (Quill, 1998), increased memory (Quill, 2000), and increased attention to social information and communication (Hagiwara & Myles, 1999; Quill, 1997).