

Irish Pipe Band Association

Cumann Buíonn Píobaire na
hÉireann



Welcoming and Catering for Special
Needs

Foreword

It isn't expected that a pipe band tutor should be able to diagnose disabilities. The idea of this section is simply to give tutors some idea of what to expect from a child presenting with a disability. Children with disabilities can be very successful musicians and it is important that pipe bands are welcoming and supportive of such children. More than likely, the disability will have been diagnosed long before the child presents at a band practice. It is important that as a tutor, you do not over-react or react in a negative way when a parent informs you of a child's disability. A disability is nothing to be frightened of and children with disabilities should not ever be discriminated against. Apart from being immoral and unethical, it is also illegal.

It is important to note that most disabilities exist on a spectrum which goes from very mild to very severe. It is more than likely that if a parent feels that a child can participate in a pipe band, the child will be on the mild to moderate side of the spectrum.

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Chapter 1 : Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by:

- social impairments
- cognitive impairments
- communication difficulties
- repetitive behaviours
- Autism impacts the normal development of the brain in the areas of social interaction, communication skills, and cognitive function. Individuals with autism typically have difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, social interactions, and leisure or play activities.
- Autism greatly varies from person to person (no two people with autism are alike)

A person with ASD **might:**

- Not respond to their name (the child may appear deaf)
- Avoid eye contact
- Have difficulty understanding, or showing understanding, or other people's feelings or their own
- Repeat words or phrases over and over (echolalia)
- Give unrelated answers to questions
- Get upset by minor changes
- Have obsessive interests
- Flap their hands, rock their body, or spin in circles
- Have unusual reactions (over or under-sensitivity) to the way things sound, smell, taste, look, or feel
- Have low social skills
- Avoid or resist physical contact
- Demonstrate little safety or danger awareness
- Reverse pronouns (e.g., says "you" instead of "I")

- Have extreme anxiety and phobias, as well as unusual phobias- food colour, particular sounds, etc.
- Hyperactivity (very active)
- Impulsivity (acting without thinking)
- Short attention span
- Meltdowns
- Unusual eating and sleeping habits
- Lack of fear or more fear than expected

It is very important to note that many of the behaviours listed above can and do exist in children with other disabilities and with no disability at all.

Autistic children tend to take everything literally. They tend not to understand humour or double meaning. Everything can seem to be very 'matter-of-fact'.

Children on the autistic spectrum can often present with extraordinary talents.

Chapter 2 : Dyspraxia

Dyspraxia, is a common disorder affecting fine and/or gross motor coordination, in children and adults. Children presenting with dyspraxia of present with problems planning, organising and carrying out movements in the right order in everyday situations. Dyspraxia can also affect articulation and speech, perception and thought.

An individual's coordination difficulties may affect participation and functioning of everyday life skills in education, work and employment. Children may present with difficulties with self-care, writing, typing, riding a bike and play as well as other educational and recreational activities such as playing a musical instrument.

Some of the difficulties a tutor might have to deal with include:

- Difficulties in adapting to a structured routine
- Unable to tie shoe laces
- Barely legible handwriting
- Immature copying skills
- Limited concentration and poor listening skills
- Literal use of language
- Inability to remember more than two or three instructions at once
- Co-ordination difficulties
- Difficulty holding drumsticks or chanter correctly.
- Difficulty lifting and lowering specified fingers on a chanter.
- Difficulty covering the holes on a chanter.
- Inability to form relationships with other children.

Chapter 3: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. (ADHD)

Attention Deficit is something that a pipe band instructor will often come across. It isn't always a case of a diagnosed disorder. Attention deficit and hyperactivity present in many different ways. Children may have a very sugary diet. Children may not be used to having their behaviour regulated outside of a school environment. And children who have been diagnosed may also present at a band practice.

Attention deficit present along the following lines:

- Often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, or with other activities.
- Often has trouble holding attention on tasks or activities.
- Often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly.
- Often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace (e.g., loses focus, side-tracked).
- Often has trouble organizing tasks and activities.
- Often avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to do tasks that require mental effort over a long period of time.
- Often loses things necessary for tasks and activities (e.g. school materials, pencils, books, tools, wallets, keys, paperwork, eyeglasses, mobile telephones).
- Is often easily distracted
- Is often forgetful in daily activities.

The Hyperactivity element often presents as follows:

- Often fidgets with or taps hands or feet, or squirms in seat.
- Often leaves seat in situations when remaining seated is expected.
- Often runs about or climbs in situations where it is not appropriate (adolescents or adults may be limited to feeling restless).
- Often unable to play or take part in leisure activities quietly.
- Is often "on the go" acting as if "driven by a motor".
- Often talks excessively.
- Often blurts out an answer before a question has been completed.
- Often has trouble waiting their turn.
- Often interrupts or intrudes on others (e.g., butts into conversations or games)

Children who present with ADHD symptoms may, or may not, have a diagnosis but dealing with them should be the same. Some children with severe ADHD may be on medication and if so, it is expected that a parent would inform an instructor. Children with ADHD require lots of patience and

understanding and require a lot of tutor direction to keep them focused and on task. The section on class organisation contain advice on this area.

Children with ADHD usually cannot regulate themselves so it is futile to issue threats or pleas about behaviour. Lessons and practices that are well organised and dynamic will help in keeping them on task. A tutor needs to have realistic expectations with regard to hyperactive children. Do not expect them to sit listening to you for long periods. The "Learn by Doing' principle applies to all children but especially to children who suffer from ADHD. Keep them active and motivated as much as possible. Allow them some leeway. Never try to put a square peg into a round hole ?

If any tutor is a little sceptical about the condition of ADHD, I would invite them to think back to the last family wedding and remember the aunt or the uncle who kept going all night long on the dance floor and wanted everyone else to join in ! Or remember the friend who simply cannot stay sitting in the one place for any length of time. He/she is no sooner there but he/she wants to move on to the next place.

Chapter 4: Dyslexia

Dyslexic children and adults struggle to read fluently, spell words correctly and learn a second language, among other challenges. But these difficulties have no connection to their overall intelligence. In fact, dyslexia is an unexpected difficulty in reading in an individual who has the intelligence to be a much better reader. While people with dyslexia are slow readers, they often, paradoxically, are very fast and creative thinkers with strong reasoning abilities.

Dyslexia is also very common, affecting 20 percent of the population .

Dyslexia can't be "cured" – it is lifelong. But with the right supports, dyslexic individuals can become highly successful students and adults.

A dyslexic person may present with many of the indicators listed below:

- Difficulty remembering the names of letters .
- Does not associate letters with sounds, such as the letter b with the "b" sound
- Mispronounces familiar words
- Trouble remembering dates, names, telephone numbers, random lists, sequences and patterns.
- Doesn't recognize rhyming patterns like cat, bat, rat
- A family history of reading and/or spelling difficulties (dyslexia often runs in families)
- Searches for a specific word and ends up using vague language, such as "stuff" or "thing," without naming the object
- Pauses, hesitates, and/or uses lots of "um's" when speaking
- Confuses words that sound alike, such as saying "tornado" for "volcano," substituting "lotion" for "ocean"
- Seems to need extra time to respond to questions
- Poor spelling
- Messy handwriting
- Low self-esteem that may not be immediately visible

Music relies to a great deal on patterns and sequences- rhythms and scales . The difficulty with sequencing can impact on pipe band students in relatively simple tasks like playing the scale or reproducing a simple rhythm. Whereas the scale becomes an automatic movement pattern for most pipers , it may not become such an automatic pattern for a dyslexic.

Dyslexia has nothing to do with intelligence. It is a form of blindness. Blindness to patterns and symbols. It will impact on a child's ability to participate in written music examinations for example so it is vitally important that such students are not singled out or embarrassed. A typical dyslexic piper will need to rely heavily on musical memory and will need help in developing different strategies for learning off music.

Chapter 5 : Attention Seeking Behaviour

Attention Seeking Behaviour is very common in young children and is not unknown in adults. The behaviour is often associated with children who are diagnosed as ADHD but it isn't by any means confined to such children.

Attention-seeking behaviour may stem from jealousy, low self-esteem, loneliness, or as a result of a personality disorder. There are many reasons kids seek attention: they're bored, tired, hungry, or in need of quality time with their parents. But the reasons a child acts this way aren't as important as learning how to respond when they do. Keep in mind that much attention-seeking behaviour is normal.

Giving children attention, even when it's negative attention, encourages those behaviours to continue.

Ignoring mild misbehaviours teaches them that obnoxious behaviour won't get them desired results.

Vying for attention can take on many forms. Some people may be looking for positive attention wherever they can get it, whereas others may enjoy stirring up conflict to get the attention back on themselves.

Here are nine examples of attention seeking behaviour:

1. Fishing for compliments: An individual looking for praise instead of being organically complimented is a red flag that the individual is attention seeking.
2. Exaggerating a story: Embellishing a story and over-dramatizing what actually happened is also a sign.
3. Purposefully being argumentative to cause a scene: This is classic attention seeking behaviour because a big scene will place the individual in the centre of the group.
4. Seeking sympathy: Getting sympathy from others isn't always a negative thing. When we lose a loved one, we often get sympathy from others. For attention seekers, sympathy seeking involves purposefully doing certain things or embellishing stories to be portrayed as a victim. Attention seekers also seek sympathy by complaining often for things large and small, hoping one of these things will provoke sympathy in others.
5. Pretending to not know how to do something so someone will help: People may pretend to have more needs than they actually have because they want someone around to just give them undivided attention.
6. Pretending to be able to do something no one else can: Some may want people to look at what they can do and praise them.
7. Obsessively taking photos for the sole purpose to post on social media: Posting for the purpose for others to view and praise is a red flag of attention seeking behaviour if someone has gone out of their way drastically to capture the photo, and if this is done often.
8. Constantly taking over the conversation: Diverting a story to talk about oneself is a clear sign of attention seeking behaviour.
9. Being opportunistic at someone else's expense or circumstance: Similar to seeking sympathy or taking over a conversation, being opportunistic diverts attention to you for something that is unrelated to you so the focus can stay on you