



Changing the Narrative on Autism:
How Nonspeaking People
Have Informed Us
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Sensory Health & Autism - June 8, 2022

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Imagine



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LANGUAGE IS

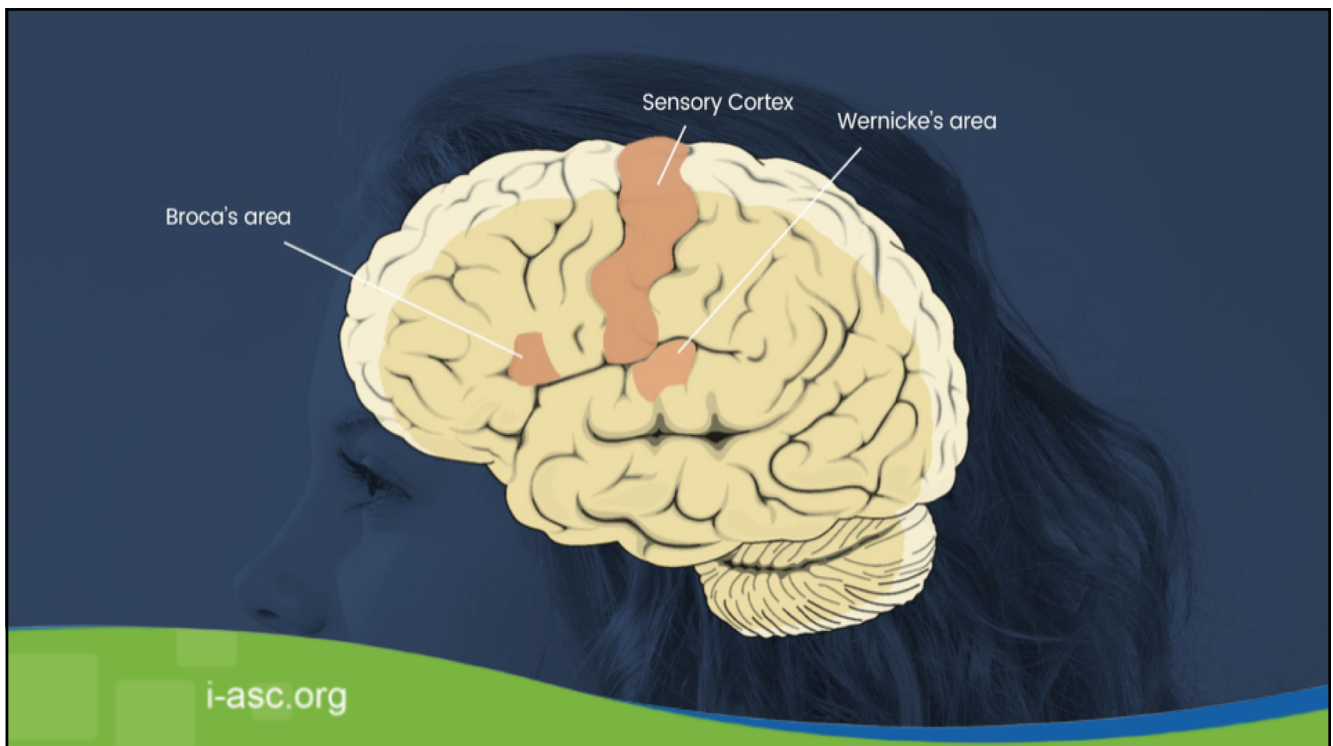
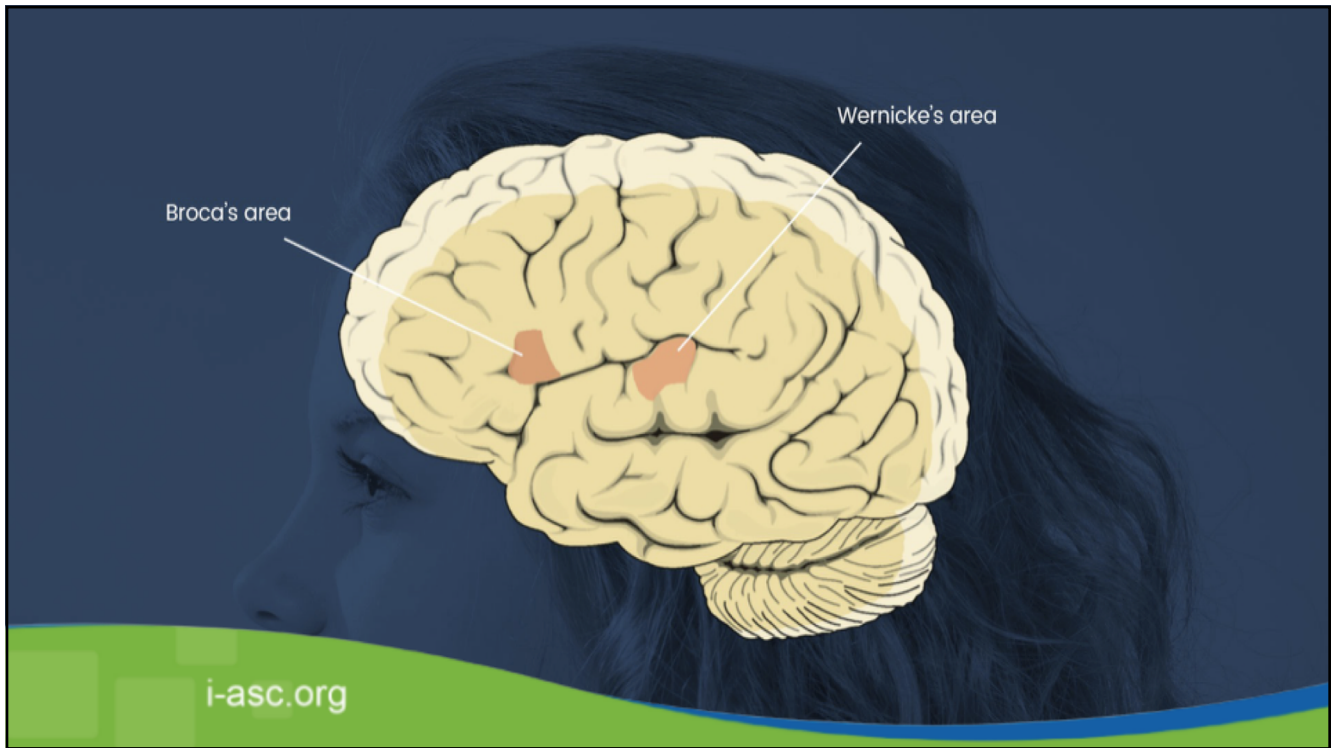
Cognitive

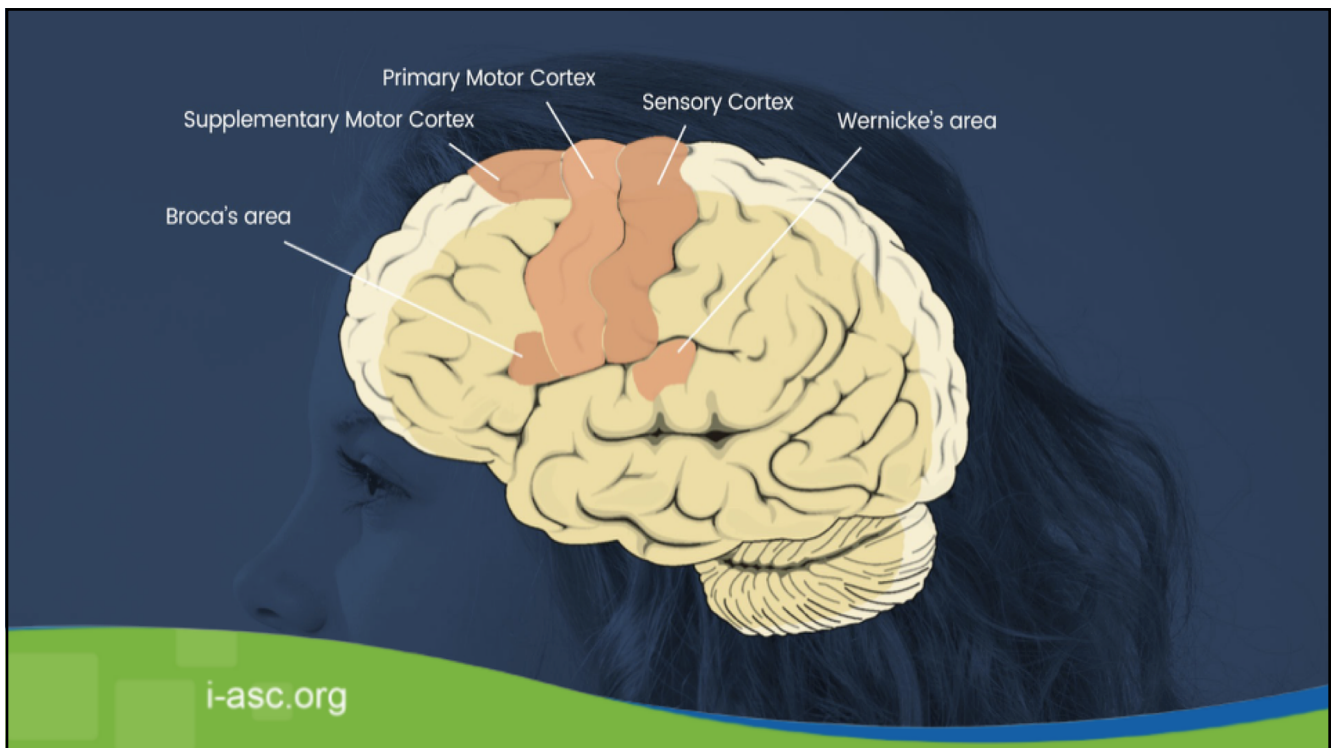
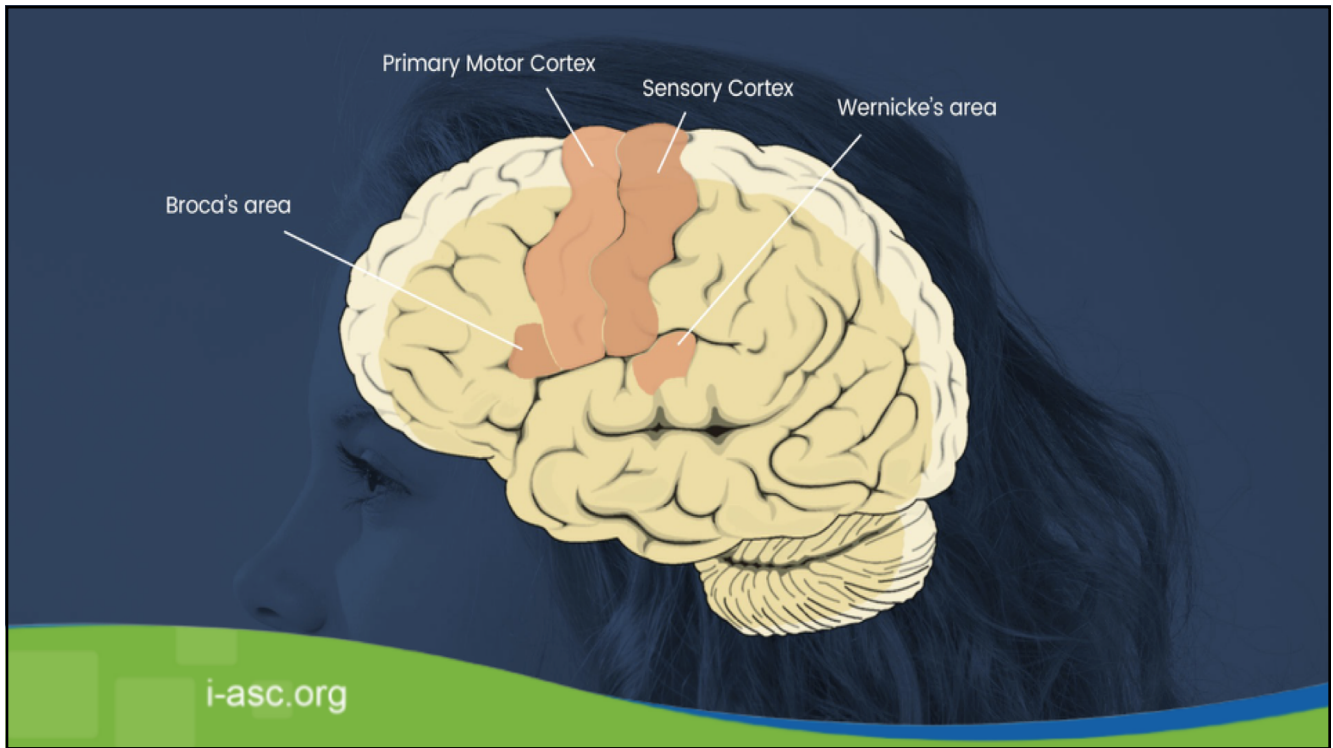
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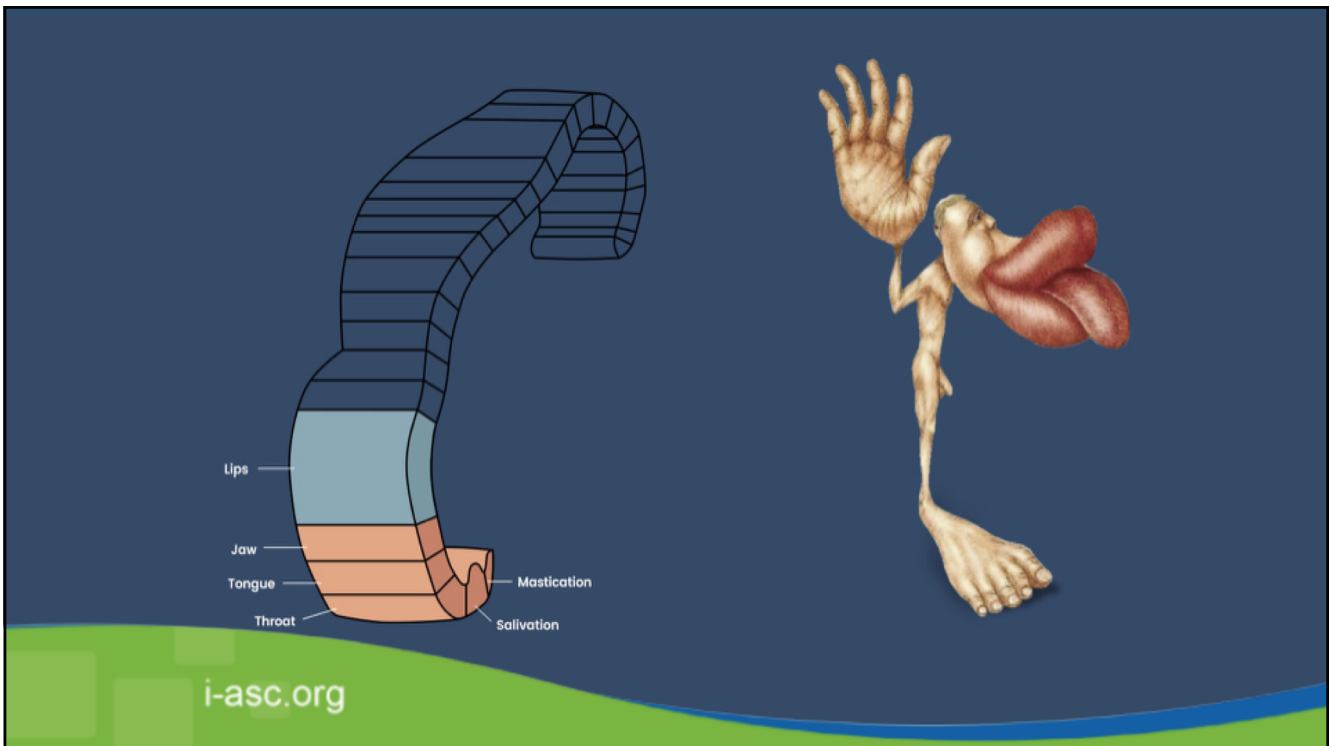
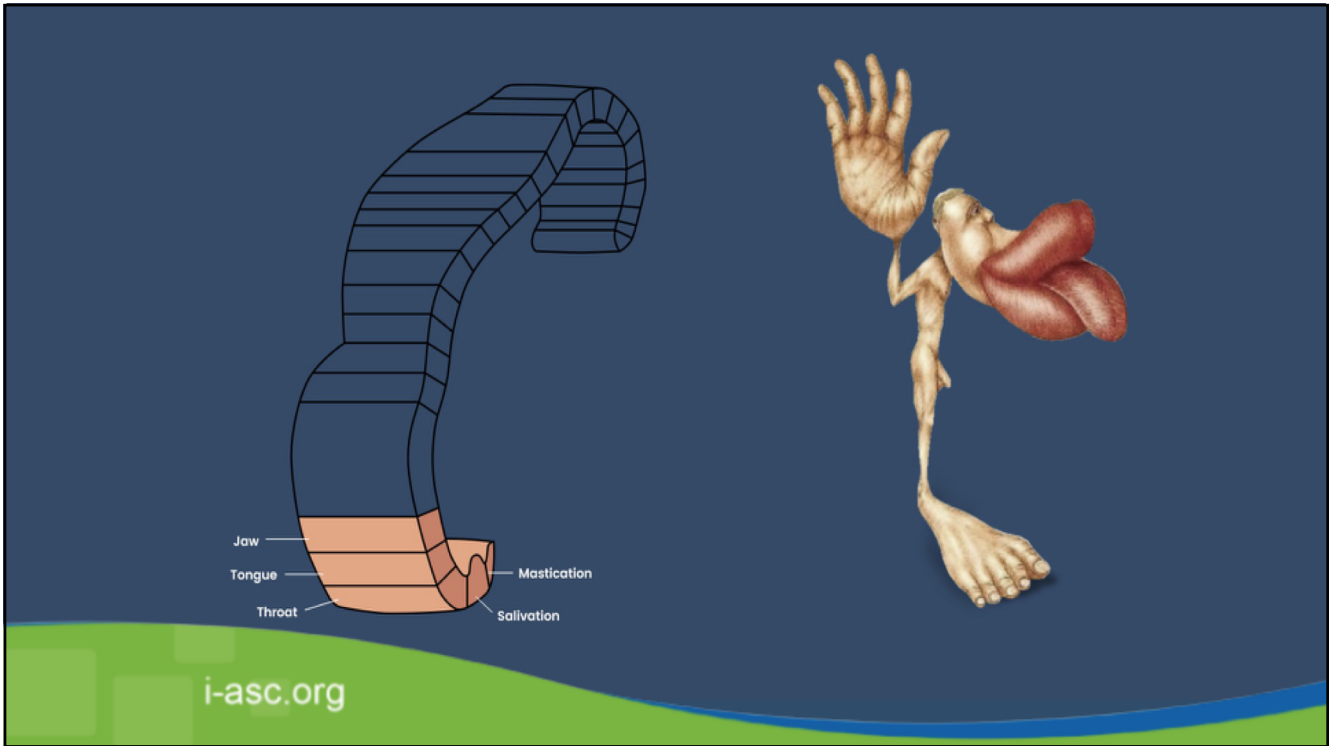
SPEECH IS

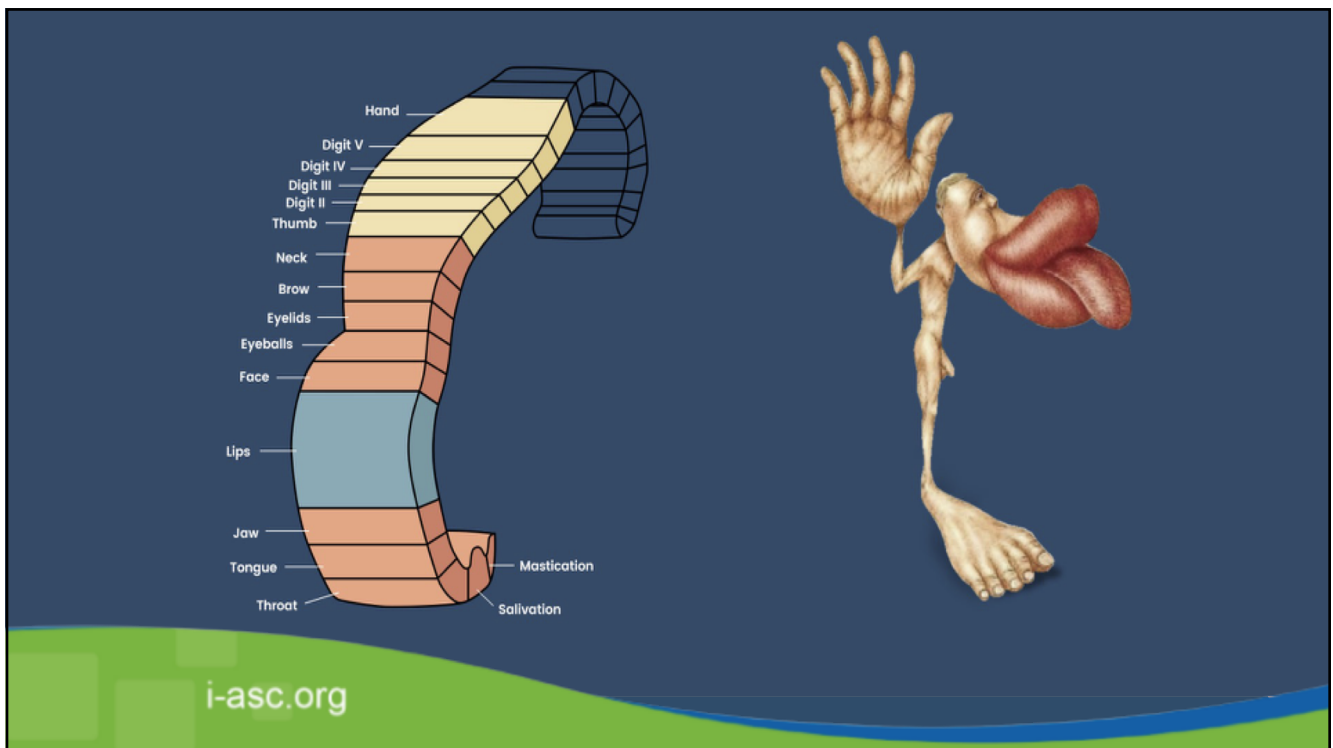
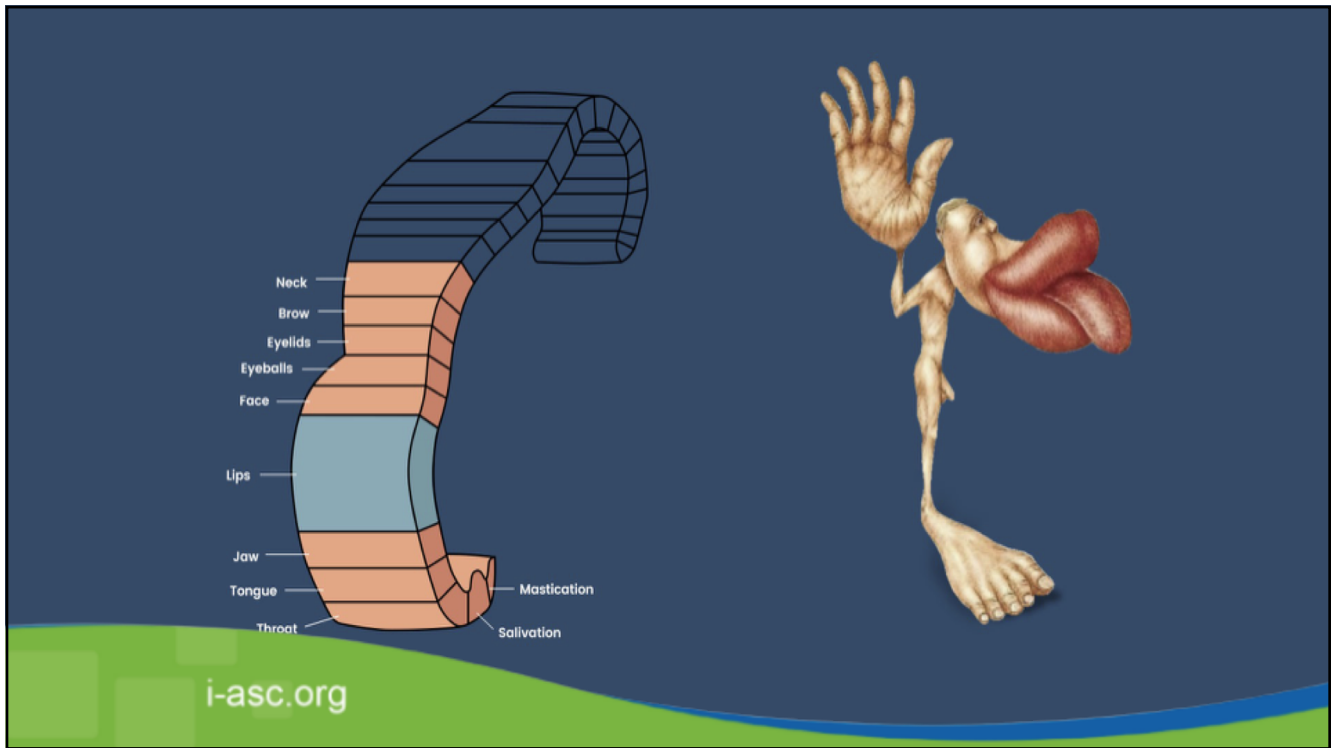
Motor

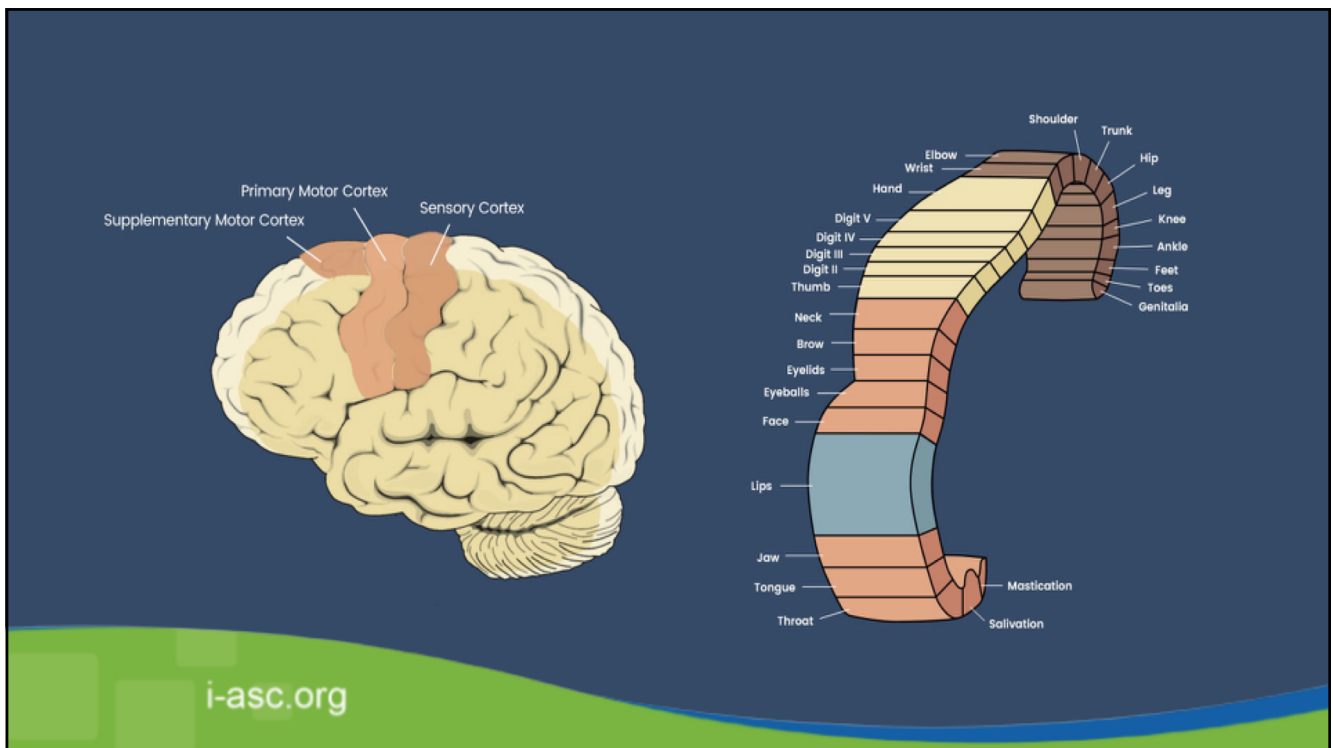
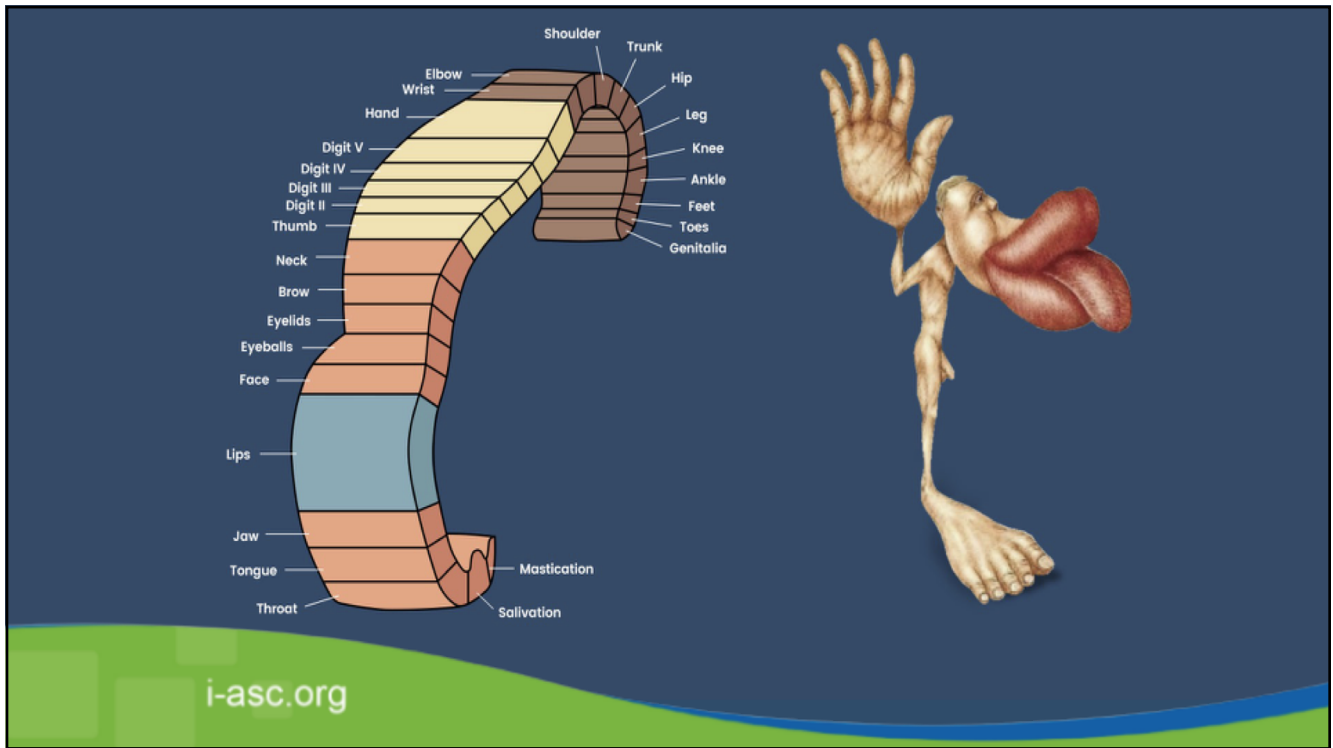
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Nonspeaking vs Nonverbal

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Nonspeaking vs Nonverbal

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PRAXIS

“The ability to execute chains of smooth motor movements.”

—The Hussman Institute for Autism, 2015

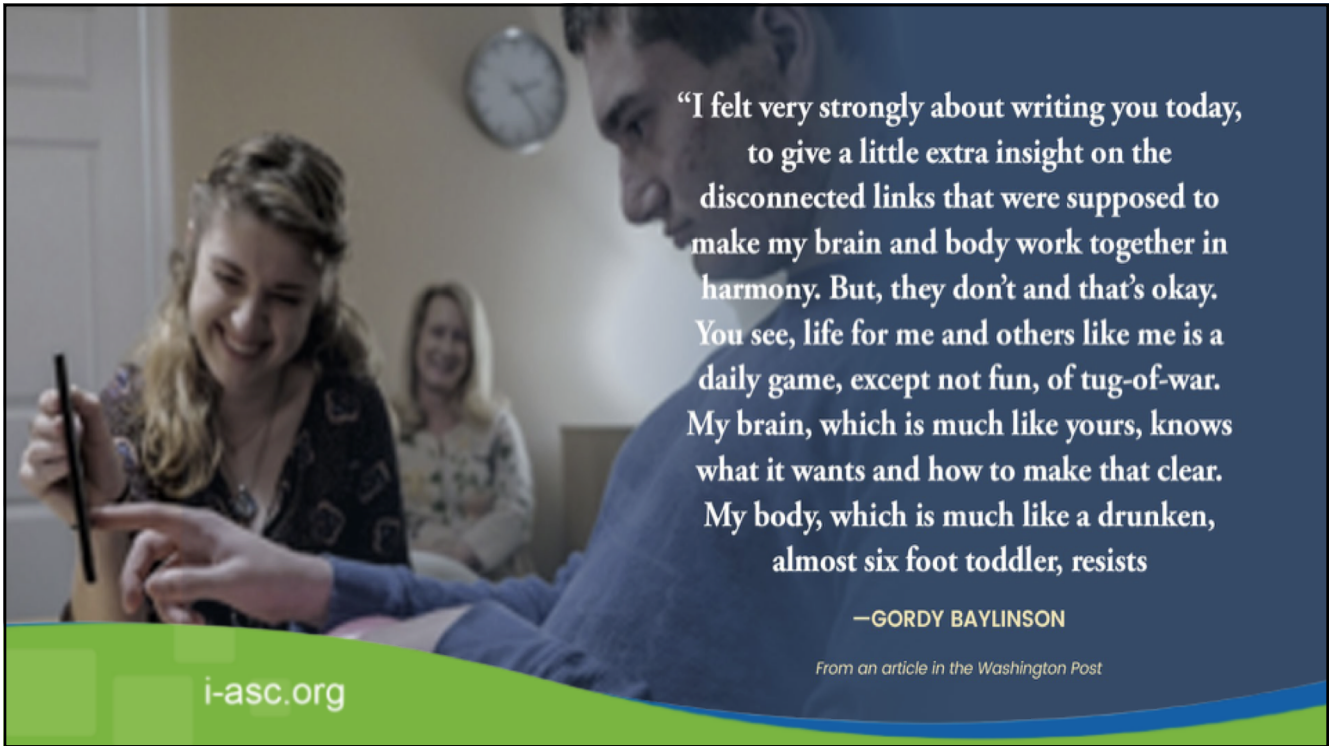
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Apraxia

“... have problems saying sounds, syllables and words. This is not because of muscle weakness or paralysis. **The brain has problems planning to move the body parts (e.g., lips, jaw, tongue) needed for speech.** The child knows what he or she wants to say, but his/her brain has difficulty coordinating the muscle movements necessary to say those words.”

—AMERICAN SPEECH - LANGUAGE-HEARING ASSOCIATION

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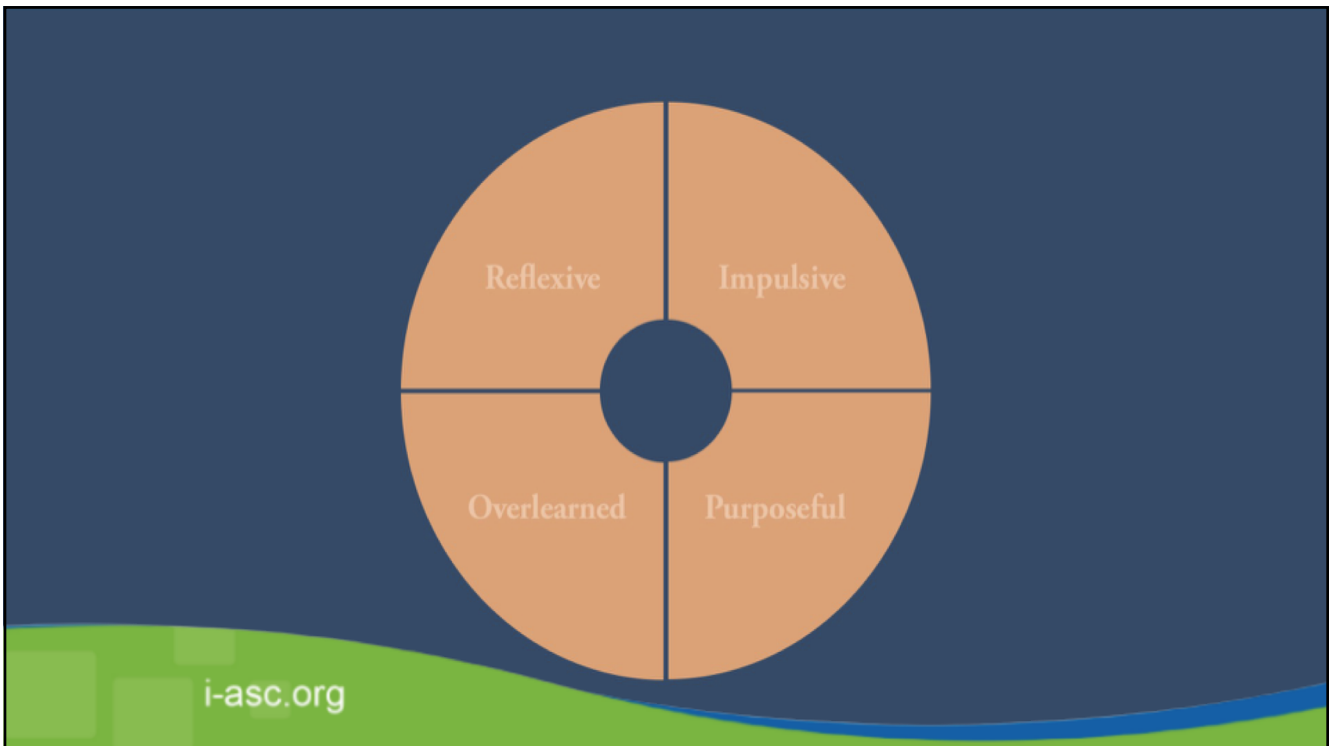


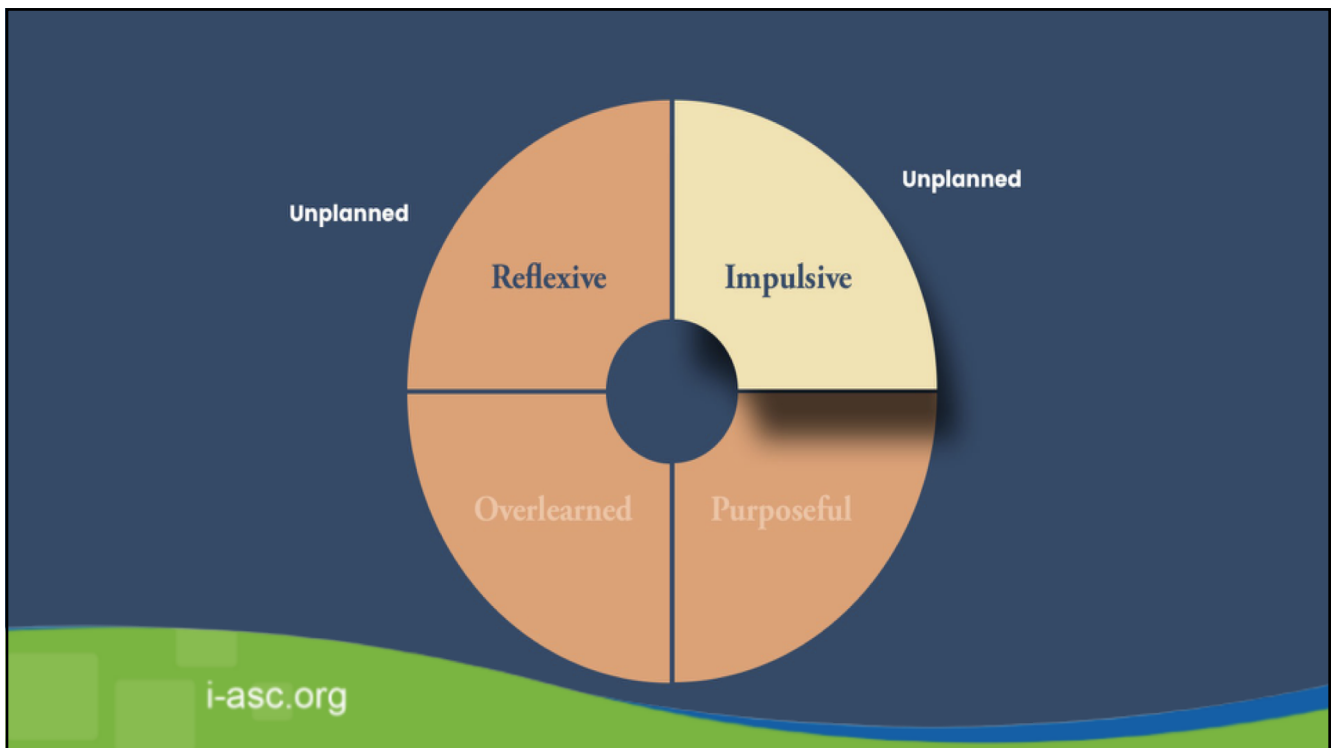
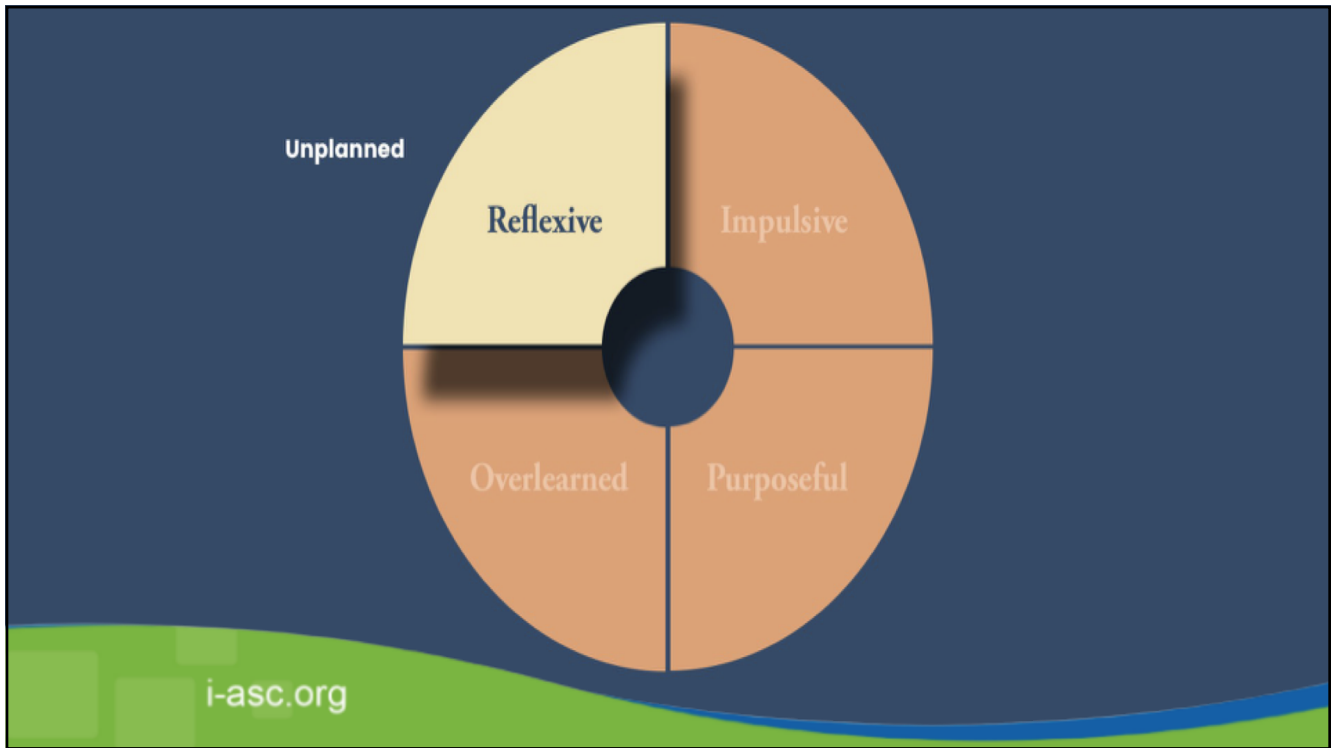
“I felt very strongly about writing you today, to give a little extra insight on the disconnected links that were supposed to make my brain and body work together in harmony. But, they don’t and that’s okay. You see, life for me and others like me is a daily game, except not fun, of tug-of-war. My brain, which is much like yours, knows what it wants and how to make that clear. My body, which is much like a drunken, almost six foot toddler, resists

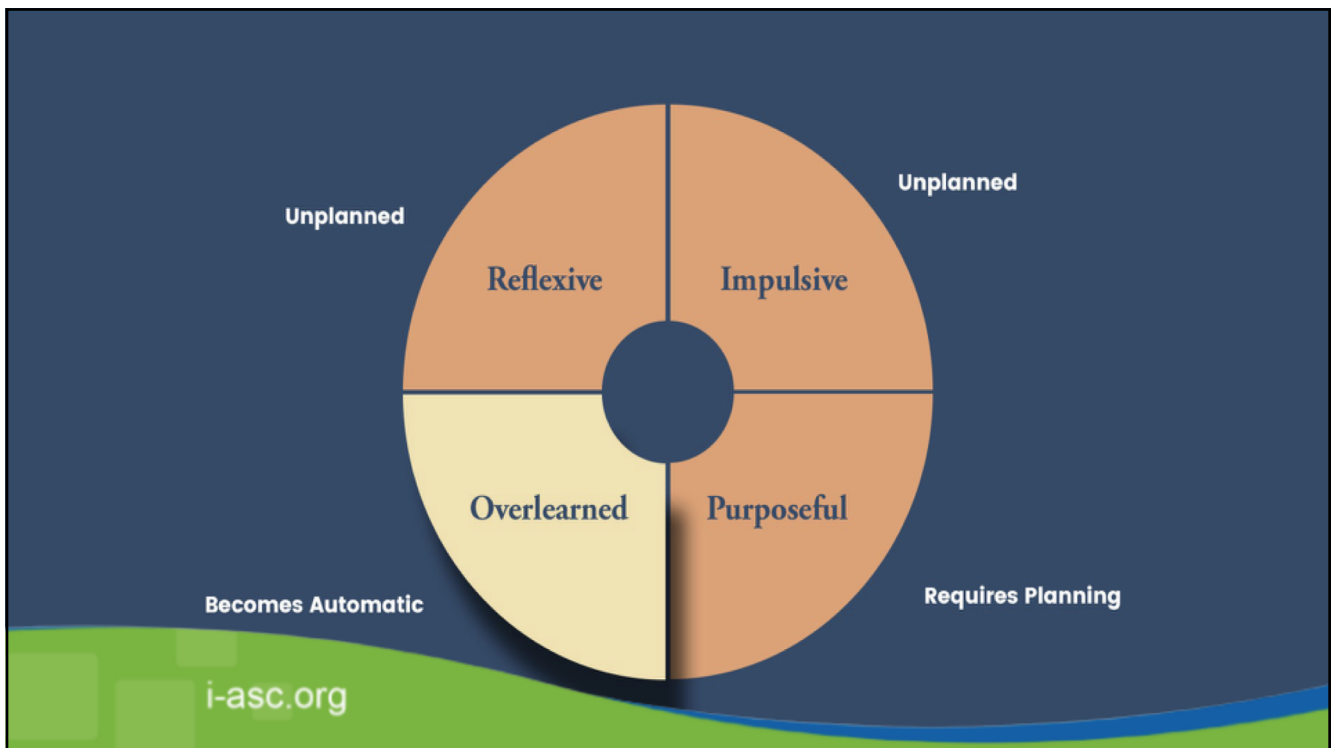
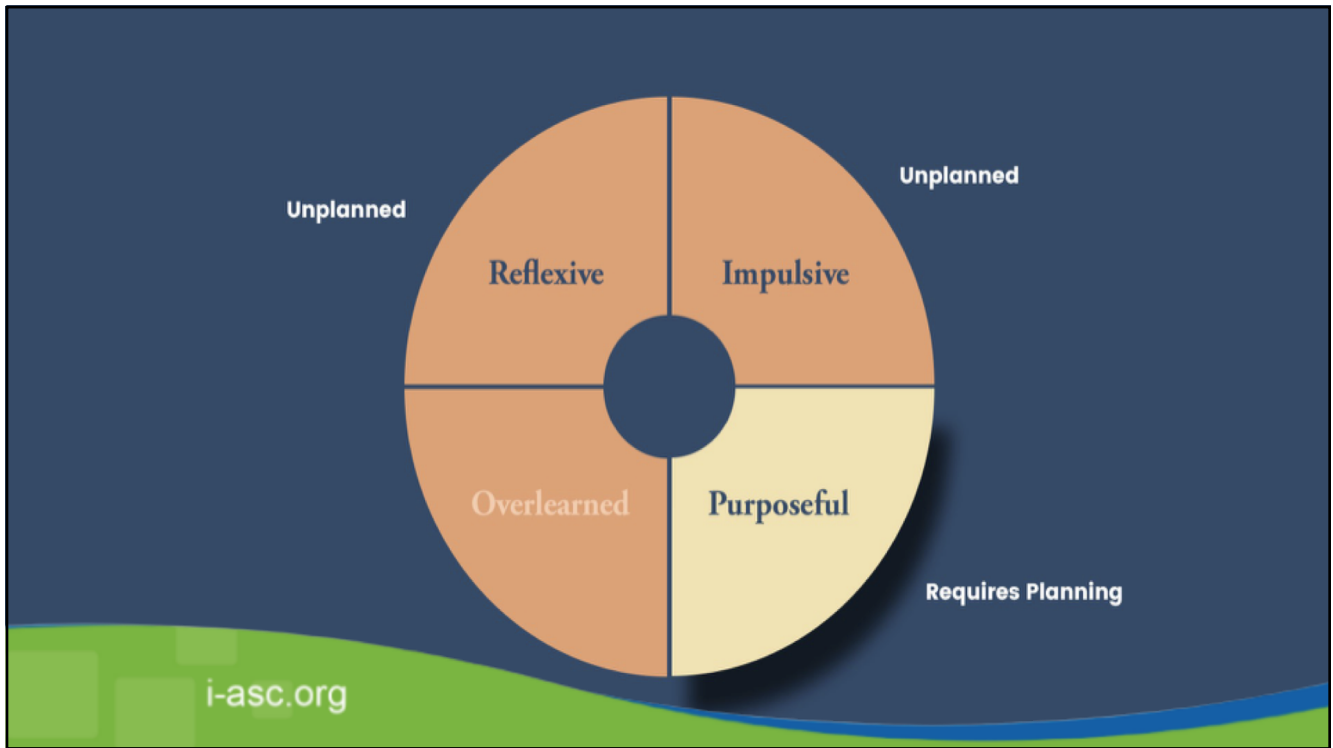
—GORDY BAYLINSON

From an article in the Washington Post

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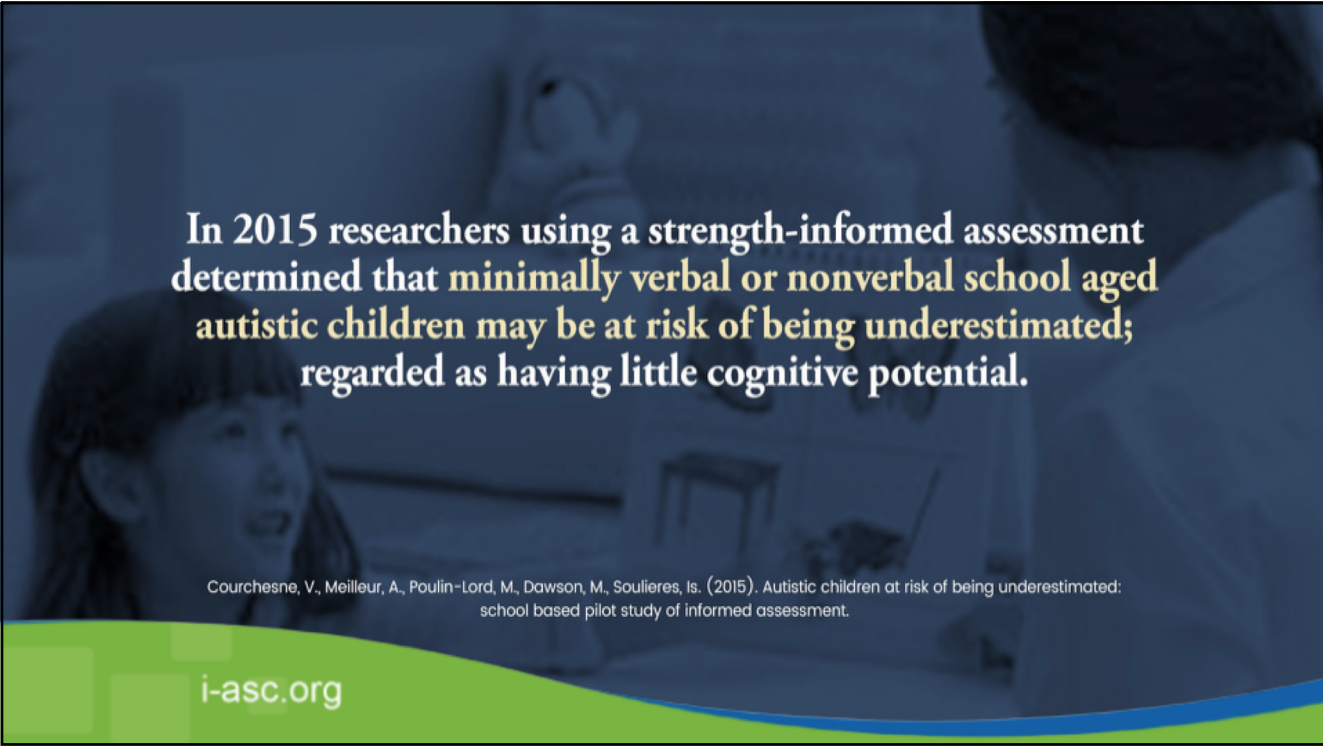
What are Tests Measuring?

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In 2010 researchers evaluated the use and utility of language comprehension tests for nonspeaking children with severe cerebral palsy. AAC was found to enhance daily communication but selection depended on perceived language comprehension. It was determined that tests designed for children with severely limited mobility were warranted but not yet designed.

Geytenbeek, J., Harlaar, L., Stam, M., Ket, H., Becher, J., Oostrom, K., Vermeulen, R.J. (11 October 2010). Utility of language comprehension tests for unintelligible or non speaking children with cerebral palsy: a systematic review. Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology.

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In 2015 researchers using a strength-informed assessment determined that **minimally verbal or nonverbal school aged autistic children may be at risk of being underestimated; regarded as having little cognitive potential.**

Courchesne, V., Meilleur, A., Poulin-Lord, M., Dawson, M., Soulières, Is. (2015). Autistic children at risk of being underestimated: school based pilot study of informed assessment.

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Least Dangerous Assumption

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Least Dangerous Assumption

Which assumption does the least damage?

Least Dangerous Assumption - one scenario may be wrong

Scenario #1

Test scores indicate low cognitive, IQ, academic abilities



Assume test accuracy: teach to test level

Error: under teaching, comprehension may be intact

Scenario #2

Test scores indicate low cognitive, IQ, academic abilities



Tests may underestimate skills: teach at age level

Error: over teaching, student may not understand



Which error are you willing to make?

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Excerpts from
THE LEAST DANGEROUS ASSUMPTION

All people have different talents and skills

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Excerpts from
THE LEAST DANGEROUS ASSUMPTION

Children learn best when they feel
valued, when people hold high
expectations for them and when they
are taught and supported well.

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Presume Competence

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Students *can* and *want* to learn

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“Constructing competence turns the process
into an action rather than a mindset.”

—CHERYL JORGENSEN
2016, ICI Summer Institute

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What is Spelling to Communicate (S2C)?

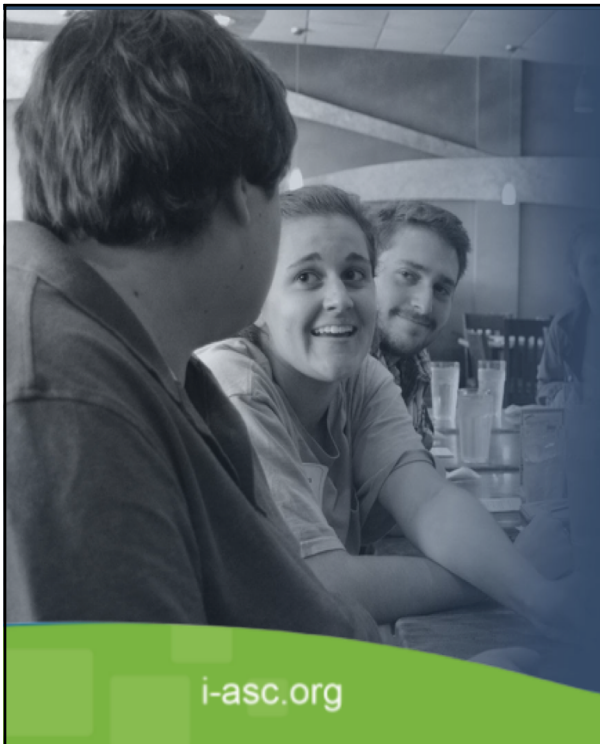


Skilled and rigorously trained communication partners teach purposeful motor skills using a hierarchy of verbal and gestural prompts. As motor skills improve through consistent practice, students progress from pointing to letters on letterboards to spell to typing on a keyboard. Accordingly, communication moves from concrete to abstract as motor skills progress.

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Autonomy vs Independence

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I have complete
autonomy of thought.
I have near complete
dependence of body.

—DAVIS HAMPE
TRIBE MEMBER

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My independence is a major goal
however I need to be able to
communicate now. Only with
a communication partner is that
possible. To deny that support
is to silence me.

—BEN MCGANN
TRIBE MEMBER

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