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from the pages
of....



EXTRAORDINARY MINDS,
PURPOSEFUL PLAY... ORDINARY STUFF

THE ASPERKID'S GAME PLAN

JENNIFER COOK O'TOOLE



EXTENSION ACTIVITIES
FOR:
COVIDEO #4: SUPERSIZE ME



#COVIDEOBUNDLE

SUPERSIZE IT

MORE

NON-LAME LEARNING

ON QUARANTINE



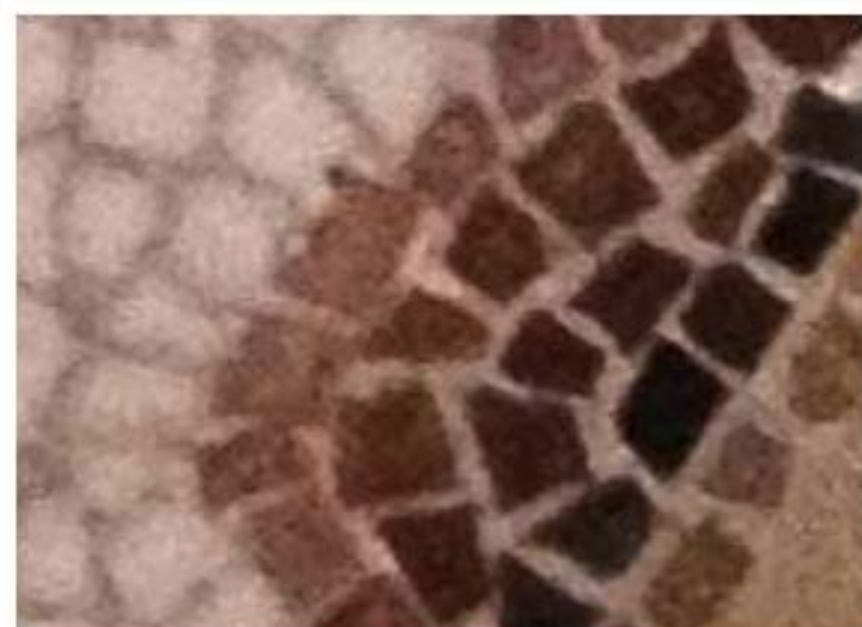
WWW.JENNIFEROTOOLEAUTHOR.COM

Gestalt It's a strange-sounding psychological term that basically means "the big picture," the "whole enchilada," the entirety of a situation. It's the forest in "not seeing the forest for the trees." And often, our kiddos are the ones missing it.

Part of diagnosing Asperger's or autism actually requires a noted fascination with "parts" of things, rather than with the "whole thing." It's just the way we think. For example, some Asperkids (generally boys) find the symbiotic relationship between wheel and axis utterly fascinating. An Aspergirl might be entranced with words—not conversation, but etymology, grammatical functions, word puzzles and poetic rhythms. It's that characteristic preference for parts that makes for lovers of Lego, complex jigsaw puzzles, family trees and cataloged collections.

Make no mistake: there is value in our way of seeing the world. I took this photo in the British Museum, where the play of dappled late afternoon sunlight on the ancient tiles was simply beguiling.

There were veins of black amidst the ambers, each selected by some long ago hand to complement its neighbor. I could almost sense that artist, twisting the stones this way or that until they suited him.



Then—at just the right angle—he would lay them so that their individual beauty was enhanced and set off the adjacent pieces. What unimaginable patience and vision this artist had, I remember thinking. What sheer determination and total absorption in the tiny bits in his finger tips.

Here's the catch: I was the only person standing a breath away from the tiles. The other onlookers were feet behind me—looking at the entire gorgeous mosaic.

Eventually, I, too, stepped back to take in the "gestalt" of the work. But even now, what I most recall was that craftsman's ability to appreciate the subtleties of even the smallest pieces as he built them into a grander whole.



Sometimes, I'll be honest, I feel sorry for NTs. They really don't appreciate the microcosmic patterns, connections and rhythms are necessary to construct bigger ideas. Aspies see beauty there—in hypnotic order, astounding simplicity and inherent complexities.

And so, I don't believe one perspective, Aspie or NT, is better than the other. It's like

looking at the mosaic. Up close (à la Aspie), the tiny tiles are beautiful in themselves. That said, I can see the trouble getting lost in pieces and missing the “bigger picture”—which I jokingly call “getting right to the toenail of the matter.”

At some point, I learned to try to take a step back and see the larger view (something that's still unnatural and challenging). For many reasons, all Asperkids need to learn the same skill. A complete perspective, after all, is inclusive; individual points of view are part of a larger whole.

Consider how very many small, mundane bits of life add up to the big, important moments. For example: if a teacher gives a summary of what will be on the final, and the Asperkid merely writes down that there will be a final, he's going to have a problem. Maybe a friend is upset and sharing an avalanche of thoughts. Can the well-meaning Asperkid understand what's bothering her friend and respond accordingly? Relationships require the personal restraint and maturity to acknowledge that one's own perception isn't the final say on what is or isn't so. Life (and everyone in it) expects us to stop, check and reconsider.

A Bit of Biology

The challenge of being able to grasp the “whole” from its “parts” goes beyond the psychological. In fact, it’s actually mirrored by a specific visual perception skill called “visual closure.” Basically, that’s the ability to correctly generalize a whole picture by seeing a part of it—much as one could (or could not) generalize a fact or rule to a universal application (i.e. “Don’t cross the street” means ALL streets, not just this one). Perhaps not so surprisingly, many Aspies’ visual closure skills, like our generalization skills, are markedly weak.

Why might this matter? It turns out that the ability to visualize a complete whole from incomplete information directly affects reading fluency and speed, recognizing sight words, making inferences,

predicting outcomes, completing one’s own thoughts and making accurate deductions (as in mathematics, science, and reading comprehension). Asperkids who are particularly challenged in visual closure may mix up words with close beginning or endings, struggle with project (or time) planning, spelling patterns, coloring, analogies, word finds or visualizing and completing entire processes (both academic and practical).

Now here’s the cool part: as we help kids strengthen their visual closure skills, their understanding of part-to-whole relationships seems to improve, too. In other words, this is really important stuff. We see in part. We know in part. And we have to integrate EVERY part to see the “whole truth.” How? Let’s begin by being bugs.

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Activity 4

SUPERSIZE IT!

Ready, Set

Here's what you'll need:

- a prism (optional)
- chalk or pencil and crayons
- paper
- masking tape
- an image you'd like to "supersize."

Go!

Once you've explored pointillism thoroughly, it's time for the Grand Finale. With kids, that means go big or go home. So go big. It's time to create your own mural.

1. Choose an image (a map, a photo or a famous painting) that will interest the Asperkids involved.
2. Enlarge the image as much as possible, then print it out.
3. Use a permanent marker and ruler to draw gridlines across the image. If you'd like to use the driveway as your canvas, use chalk and a level to draw the same grid outside. If you're staying inside, you'll need one sheet of paper for each section of the grid (paper should be rectangular or cut into squares, depending upon how your grid is divided).

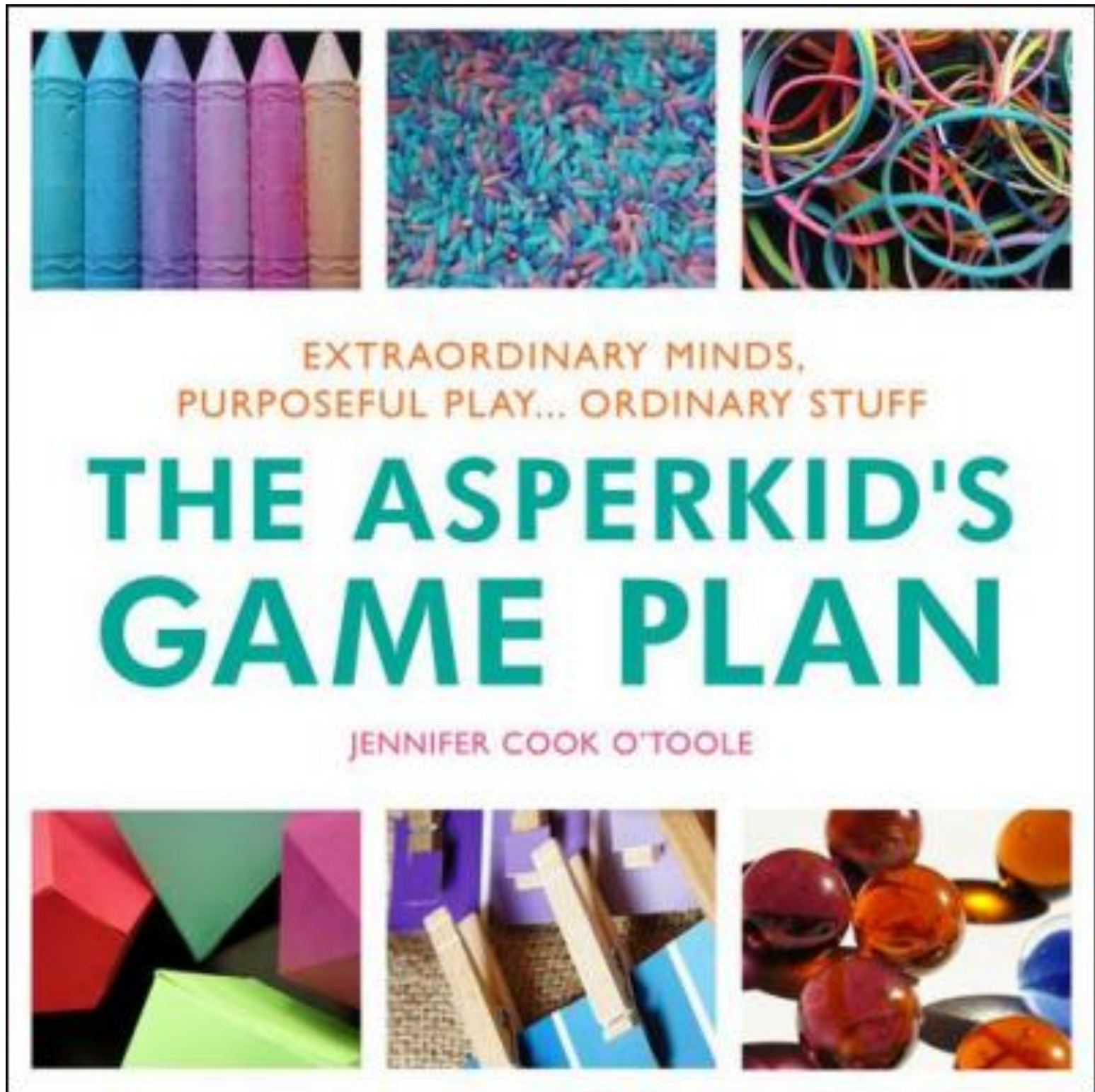
4. **CHALK MURAL:** Assign each section of the grid to an individual artist (if possible), using the grid to guide you as you sketch and color in one square at a time on the ground, matching the budding mural to the small original.

Look back at the grid before starting a new square to be sure the Asperkids are referring to the correctly corresponding spot in the model. Be patient and go slowly...the goal is participation, not perfection.



5. **PAPER MURAL:** Give a sheet of paper to each artist and *cut up the original picture* along your marker lines. Distribute the snipped bits, then, depending upon their age, abilities and confidence, outline and color in one large paper for every piece of the model. When they are all done, take the sheets of paper and assemble them like a giant jigsaw puzzle. A little masking tape on the reverse sides will give you one, large, cohesive mural.
6. If you'd like, there are also wonderful printable PDFs of murals online (usually for sale). Just print out the pre-drawn outlines, color with pastels, paints, crayons or whatever you like and tape them all together.

ALL ACTIVITIES
(AND SO MANY MORE)
FROM:



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