

There's A Boy In Here

Barron, J. & Barron, S.

Book Study



1. When Sean was 14 months old, his mother had some challenging moments with her son. Name at least three challenging behaviors that Sean exhibited. Of the three you listed, what characteristics of autism did you notice that tie into those challenging behaviors? *(Pages 1-11)*
2. As we learn about Sean's early years, we recognize the emotional stress Sean's mother must have experienced. As a professional, what could you do to offer comfort and support to a parent in a similar situation?
3. Sean describes to us what it is like for him to experience tactile and visual stimulation. Based on his description, what do you think could be the function of the behaviors? Provide an explanation to your reasoning. *(Page 15)*
4. Both Sean and his mother talk about what it was like for him to be fascinated with chains. Sean shares with us his reasoning behind "messing" with things that had chains. Because of this fascination, Sean's family worried about his safety and how his behaviors might affect others. Have you noticed any special interests in your students that may limit their social interactions with others? What are some ways you can use those interests to support appropriate social interactions? How could those interests be incorporated into your lessons or classroom routines to increase social opportunities? *(Pages 30-33)*
5. When parents suspect something is wrong or different about their child's unique behaviors, they first consult with a pediatrician/medical doctor. Sometimes, parents are not encouraged to pursue further testing and this can lead to a delay in services and supports for their child. What are some resources you can share with families if they suspect their child has autism spectrum disorder?

6. While reading about the evaluation process Sean went through to receive a diagnosis, what surprised you about the evaluation process, especially as it related to his mother? What changes have occurred over the years when it comes to families receiving a diagnosis for their child? *(Pages 45-54)*

7. Sean and his mother share about an experience that was hard for her and others to understand. They talked about going to a restaurant and how upsetting it was for Sean to have a waiter or waitress bring a glass of water to the table. What characteristics of autism could have been impacting Sean's behavior? Think of a time when a student may have exhibited a behavior that was hard for you to understand. What characteristics of ASD could have been influencing this behavior? *(Pages 66-67)*

8. Information is shared about some of the medications prescribed for Sean and the implications they had on his behavior. Many individuals with ASD are often prescribed medications for attention deficit, hyperactivity, sleep, anxiety, etc.. Why is it important for educators to know about the biological needs of individuals with ASD? What is something you can do to encourage family-school collaboration when it comes to addressing biological needs of your students? *(Pages 70-74)*

9. Many times ASD can affect the family unit. Siblings can feel neglected and husband and wives may spend less time together. Sean's mother talks about how worried she was about her daughter, Sean's sister, and the impact Sean's ASD had on her behavior. Think of a time in your classroom, where a student with ASD or complex needs impacted other students' behavior. What might be some strategies you could put in place to help others understand the student's unique characteristics? *(Pages 78-80)*

10. Sean shared with us his experience entering kindergarten. Sean reveals to us what school was like and how important structure was for him. When Sean came home from school, his behaviors seem to worsen. Why is structure so important for individuals with ASD? List three ways you structure your classroom or program to support students with ASD or complex needs. *(Pages 82-85)*

11. Individuals with ASD have restricted patterns of behavior, interests and activities. Sean's intense interests at times became dangerous. Sean gives us reasoning behind his obsessions and what they meant to him. Why is it important for us to understand and learn more about our students' special interests? How can we work with families to help them understand and learn how to use their child's special interests? *(Pages 86-92)*

12. Sean experiences many sensory differences. Which senses was he having the most difficulty with and how do you know? Do you think Sean was over-responsive or under-responsive to the sensory experiences in his environment? What are some things you can do in your classroom and/or programs to support students' sensory differences? Give at least two examples. *(Pages 95-96)*

13. Children with ASD, with and without speech, struggle to learn how to communicate with others. Because impaired communication development is a defining characteristic of ASD, it is critical to understand the learner's communication challenges in order to meet the needs of the child. Although verbal, Sean really struggled with the rules of conversation. Sean shares how he used "states" to try and converse with others. Think of two strategies that could be put in place to help Sean with his communication differences and describe them. *(Pages 103-107)*

14. Sean talks about how difficult reading comprehension was for him as well as understanding the feelings of others. Most individuals with ASD show unevenness in their cognitive ability. Sean struggled with Theory of Mind, the ability to understand the thoughts and feelings of others, which often times results in academic difficulties. Why is it important for us to be familiar with the concept of Theory of Mind and to be able to recognize when mindblindness is occurring for individuals with ASD? Also, why is math easier sometimes for a student like Sean, while reading may prove to be more difficult? *(Pages 112-115)*

15. While reading this section, we learn of some very difficult and trying times for Sean's parents. Sean's behavior was becoming more difficult. This was resulting in his parents losing their patience with him. Sometimes, as professionals, we forget the exhaustion parents must face on a daily basis trying to reach their child. Reinforcement strategies may have been something for Sean's mother to try with him. What are some reinforcement strategies you use in your classroom? Give an example of at least two. How can you encourage reinforcement in the home environment? Why is it important for home and school to be consistent when it comes to reinforcement? *(Pages 122-126)*

16. Sean attended a residential school. This was a very difficult decision for Sean's family to make. We also learn Sean was not happy about going there. While there, Sean struggled with being bullied, as well as being the bully to a certain child. Sean explains to us why he bullied the child. What kinds of supports do you have in your classroom for anti-bullying? What are some resources you could share with families to help them understand more about bullying? (Pages 127-140)
17. Often times parents feel like they are being blamed for their child's behaviors. Sean's mother talks about their family therapy sessions and how the psychiatrist made her feel like it was her fault for Sean being the way he was. Sometimes, as professionals, we forget how difficult IEP meetings can be for families. What are some things you can do to support families to make them feel more comfortable during IEP and/or school meetings? Give at least two examples. (Pages 146-149)
18. It was very difficult for Sean to relate to other people. He informed us that sometimes the only way to get attention from others was through behaviors. Explain how you can help prepare students with ASD in your classroom to communicate their feelings in more socially appropriate ways. Provide a couple of examples. (Pages 155-163)
19. Many individuals with ASD may struggle in areas such as recognizing others' non-verbal communication, understanding jokes, and making or keeping friends. This was evident with Sean. Think of a student in your class that struggles with connecting with peers. What intervention(s) could you put in place to help support their social differences? Give at least two examples. (Pages 177-184)
20. We know change can be very hard for some individuals with ASD. We learned of Sean's struggle with the move to California. What kinds of supports could you put in place for students with ASD who are transitioning to a new teacher and/or building for the next school year? Also, what could you do as a receiving person of someone with ASD to help make them more comfortable and prepared for your classroom? (Pages 208-210)

21. We learn of Sean's attachment to several teachers he had throughout his late school years. He would become attracted to them because of how nice they were to him. Sean developed crushes on several of his teachers. This led to misunderstanding and often times a feeling of embarrassment for Sean when they did not feel the same way about him. How can we help students like Sean understand the rules of relationships? What kinds of supports can we put in place to ensure our students understand the unwritten rules of social relationships?
22. When Sean made a connection with his mother for the first time, he felt a sense of relief. What was the breaking point for both of them? Describe why it is important for us to never give up on those with challenging behavior. *(Pages 227-231)*
23. Sean began to advocate for himself. He made many decisions on his own to help gain independence and a life of quality. Why was this so important for Sean to do for himself? What kinds of things can we do to support the students we serve in our classroom/program to prepare them for adulthood? *(Pages 235-240)*
24. Sean's journey with ASD taught many people so many things. If you could meet Sean Barron and his mother, Judy, what would you like to ask them? List three questions for Sean and three questions for his mother and be sure to include why you would ask those questions.