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**TURN AUTISM AROUND**  
WITH DR. MARY BARBERA

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Transcript for Podcast Episode: 018

## *Ashley Rose: Teaching Social Skill Groups*

Hosted by: Dr. Mary Barbera

Mary: You're listening to the Turn Autism Around podcast, episode number 18. Today I'm interviewing Ashley Rose, who is a teacher and a creator of curriculum to teach social skills to children with and without autism. I can't wait to dive into that interview, but before we get there, let me give our listener shout-out to a person by the name BCBA-LABA and she said, "great for parents and practitioners, great information for parents and caretakers for professionals. Mary gives excellent insight as to what the parents are thinking and going through." I am proud that this podcast is accessible to both parents, care-givers, professionals, anyone who wants to help a child or even an adult with autism.

Mary: So happy for that, uh, for that review, and I would encourage you if you would, if you like what you hear to go on to iTunes or anywhere else you listen to this podcast and leave me a rating and review. Maybe I'll give you a shout out as well! So let's get to this great interview with Ashley Rose.

*Welcome to the Turn Autism Around podcast for both parents and professionals in the autism world who want to turn things around, be less stressed, and lead happier lives. And now your host, autism mom, behavior analyst, and bestselling author, Dr. Mary Barbera.*

Mary: Okay, so I'd like to introduce a special guest today, Ashley Rose, who is the owner and director of Mission Cognition, which is a social skill development center in New Jersey. She is... Uses a behavior analytic social skill program to teach kids ages three and up both with autism and without autism who, um, these kids are in need of systematic and explicit play and social skill instruction. Ashley has a background in psychology, applied behavior analysis and special education. She's been working in the autism and ABA field for 15 years and in her free time, she's the administrator of the ABA Skillshare group on Facebook, which is a great group. And uh, that's where I became familiar with Ashley a while ago, I don't know how long that group's been going, but welcome Ashley to the podcast.

Ashley: Thank you so much. I'm thrilled to be here.

Mary: Great. So can you describe your fall into the autism world?

Ashley: Sure. So I think describing it as a fall is very, very accurate. Not at all something that I planned for, but I couldn't be happier that it happened, it absolutely changed my life. So my first exposure to ABA autism was very early on, as early as fifth grade. And I don't have a sibling, I don't have a family member. I just happened to live in an area where we're pretty advanced in their programming school programs for kids who are on the spectrum. They had the opportunity to see some of those programs within the school that I was in as a student. So very unsure and not very comfortable with the population. It wasn't until I was 17, 18 years old that I took a job as a mother's helper for a family whose youngest son was on the spectrum. Turned out that family was phenomenal in sort of catapulting putting me into the field. The mom did a lot of research, went to a lot of conferences and took me along with her. So I just had so many opportunities early on it was again, great exposure to the field and again, I couldn't be happier about that.

Mary: Great. So then you became a special education teacher or what? What then happened?

Ashley: So I started really, um, we called it mother's helper. So as a lot of our listeners may be familiar, when you have a child who's on the spectrum, it consumes so much of the parents' time. You're establishing an in-home programing, you're doing research, you're working with the school. So there's other kids in the home, it's hard to spread out that attention. So my primary responsibilities were with the siblings, but then I would see therapists coming and going, and I thought, well, what's all, you know, what's all that about?

Ashley: I was invited to sit in on a couple of sessions and to be honest, I was a bit scared off. It was some quote unquote old school ABA tech 10 in a row. And I'll talk about how I feel about verbal behavior, but yes, then I decided this is what I want to go to school for. I taught a Pre-K inclusion program throughout that entire time. I continued to do in home, in-home programming and then I moved on to being a school consultant, but prior to opening the center.

Mary: Okay. So, um, when did you first... You said you were, it was kind of old school ABA and 10 in a row. You're talking about like 10 of the same...

Ashley: Touch your nose, touch your nose, your nose.

Mary: Yeah. So that is more of the traditional Lovaas type approach and that's where Lucas started with his ABA therapy. So at what point or what year... What was the situation when you started to move more towards the verbal behavior approach and how did you get started with that?

Ashley: I was 19 years old, sitting in the front row of Dr. Carbone's three day intro to verbal behavior. And I tell that story because who does that really happen to? And again, I'm just, I feel so blessed and so thankful for the people that I've met in my, in my journey. But the mom said to me, did you like what you saw when I, when I saw the therapy and I said, um, no honestly, and I'm, I think that my opinion really, I don't know if it's valid because I mean I have no training, no expertise in this area shouldn't learning be a little bit more fun? Can we mix it up a little bit? So she said, there's this new thing, verbal behavior, let's go learn about it. I said, Oh, I'm on board.

Mary: You were still, you were still, were you still a mommy's helper, or did you turn into a therapist?

Ashley: They were turning into a therapist and then before you knew it, I'm carrying a pink bin full of materials to every neighborhood house. Um, and again, I mean that would be something people would be horrified of now, like oh, I don't have the training. But I think sometimes when you just have some natural instincts about kids. I was learning, I read as much as I could. I went to everything I could go to. Back then, certification was very, very new. No such thing as an RBT, and BCBA was fairly new. So, you know, it was allowable and I loved it, but I jumped on board with really learning as much as I could about what a verbal behavior approach really, really meant and how that fell under the umbrella of ABA.

Mary: And what year was that?

Ashley: Uh, that would have been 2000, 2003 that I, I went to that three day conference and whenever your book came out I, you know, I was sure to read that right away as well. So that's an, it's, it's very cool to speak with you because you're such a part of my very early experience and introduction, so to get to speak with you, it's awesome.

Mary: And I think around 2002 was when I went to see Dr. Vincent Carbone as well and he was a big part of my learning about verbal behavior, and really if it wasn't for him going around the country talking about the Abeles back then, um, I don't know how many of us would be talking about it today. Certainly my book wouldn't have been written and you know, we were doing a Lovaas type approach. But it is, it is very different. And I think even some of the people that have done a traditional approach are moving towards incorporating more verbal behavior strategies. And you know, it was kind of the wild west back then in 2002 because really no one knew what they were doing. And so it was, it was quite scary. And then I became involved with the Pennsylvania Verbal Behavior project in 2003 which was also a huge part of my background. So, um, so you're still, you're in New Jersey, right?

Ashley: I am, yes.

Mary: And you run this center. So can you tell us about the center or centers and what that looks like and the, and this is what you do full time now. You're not a teacher in a school. You, you just run the center or do you... Just tell us about what you do? What the center is like?

Ashley: So this is absolutely full, absolutely full time. We serve... We have three locations. We serve about 70 students in our largest facility and then we have satellite locations serving about 25 students. And we serve as you mentioned, um, students as young as three all the way through young adult. Many of our students are on the autism spectrum. We also serve quite a few students have an ADHD diagnosis or speech and language delays. So for us, diagnosis doesn't necessarily drive treatment.

Ashley: Any students who are struggling socially or behaviorally for any reason are potential candidates for our program. So absolutely it's a behavioral program, assessment driven. So we get to know each of the students as individuals. We form groups based on those participant profiles with a group global focus. And then each of our participants has individual goals and objectives, which we target every single week to mastery. So data driven decisions, um, you know the works when it comes to ABA.

Ashley: What I'm most proud of with this program is it looks very, very natural. So I call it like cozy in the front and clinical in the back. So to families and visitors, it looks like a bunch of playing and having a great time, and that's absolutely what I'm striving. But then you have instructors with clipboards and timers and clickers, because I need to know that in fact, our program and interventions are working because it's not we need to change that. if it's not that we need to change that, but social skills and play, I want it, the instruction be as natural as possible. Again, we're programming for generalization. I want the skills that we teach here to then occur in the real world where it's important.

Mary: So are all the three centers, are they all located in New Jersey?

Ashley: We are, yes.

Mary: Okay. And then you're the owner of the center and the director of the three locations, and then you have other people who actually do the instruction with you or...?

Ashley: Right. So we have a team of about eight to nine instructors. So we'll have a co-facilitator we'll have lead facilitators, I'll supervise, all of the groups, depending upon the group dynamic may take the lead ins to them. I love still having a roll

up your sleeves approach. I will never instruct anybody to do something that I can't do. I will absolutely sit on the floor, you know, act like I'm a pony. I will never be beyond that. That's why I got into this field. That's why I love what I'm doing. So I will still do as much direct service as possible.

Ashley: Of course, making sure all of our programs are run with high fidelity and things of that nature. But it's just so reinforced to me. So yes, co-facilitators, technically I supervise the groups, um, but still very much a hands on approach here.

Mary: Great. So, um, is this private pay or does insurance cover or how does that work?

Ashley: We are private pay. We have a couple of funding sources, state funding sources, because not all of our kids are on the spectrum so not all the kids would even be covered for ABA services. We work very hard to keep the costs accessible and we are really able to do that because we serve so many kids and really we're such a niche service there aren't many other providers out there who have strictly focused on play and social skills junction. Oftentimes you'll find it as an add on. And I love that that so many providers are recognizing the need and wanting to offer this service, but I just find social skills to be complex. I really do have to devote all of my time to doing the research on that specific topic in order for me to feel comfortable offering the highest quality program that we can.

Mary: Okay. So what do you think... and now let's just move to the kids in your centers with the diagnosis of autism, and you have background as a special education teacher, and so what do you think are, are the issues with social skills, social deficits, and the way that most people, well-meaning people treat kids, social instruction and play that are on the spectrum? Just all across the spectrum at this point. Just what are the broad issues that you see people making mistakes with?

Ashley: Sure. I find that regardless of age, we're still looking at those core deficits. So what qualified them for that autism diagnosis in the first place? What is the DSM outlining for us? So I see deficits and definitely the shared attention, shared effect, joint attention, social referencing. And that goes from our earliest learners to our advanced learners. So kids who carry a, you know, an Asperger's diagnosis who are extremely bright, even conversational, but can't interpret what I mean by a facial expression, whether or not.. I want them to continue talking about that topic. So I think that we're really missing foundation skills and it's an issue.

Ashley: So I believe that everybody is well meaning in the way that they're providing instruction or the targets that we're choosing, um, but I often use the term or the phrase "having social skills versus being skilled socially". So you could check off a lot of boxes for social skills and say, wow, look at this social skills repertoire.

Look how many social skills they have. But why does the interaction still look awkward? Because they're not skilled socially. They're not fluent. They're not able to make changes based on their conversational partner or their play partner's behavior. So you have this, uh, just this wrote list of skills and I think that's where a social skills provider, we're really missing the mark. And it's much more difficult, I think, to program and identify those foundational social skills and work on them so it may be why some people avoid them, it's a huge issue. And I think that we're doing the kids a disservice when we hit it from the top rather than the bottom, and don't build that strong foundation.

Mary: So how in your experience, early on especially, how do people typically teach social skills to kids with autism?

Ashley: My turn, your turn. I see that constantly and I actually rarely teach my turn, your turn, and when I do, it's under very, very specific circumstances. Again, where people are missing the mark is, really needs to be familiar with how typical kids interact with each other. Don't teach odd skills. Um, and that's what's happening. People, I find it, and I hate to generalize it so broadly. I certainly don't mean everyone, but in, in many programs I, I've seen the focus is on manners or creating these little ladies and gentlemen where it's very easy for adults to get along with them, but it doesn't make other kids like them. So we really need to be focusing on that. So one of the quotes I go back to, Dr. Scott Bellini talks about, appropriate social skills are not always successful social skills. So what we might find inappropriate if a child is displaying that skill with a group of their peers and they're all laughing and joking with each other, who am I to interrupt that? Because I don't think, you know potty humor is funny as an adult? Well, they're not telling the joke to me. They're telling it to their peers. So I would actually absolutely stand back from that. And I would view that as a very, very successful social interaction. Um, so sometimes as adults we just get in our own way when it comes to teaching social skills.

Mary: I've seen a lot of people teach, try to teach social skills or even have goals in the IEP for like, they will have three conversational turns or you know, some social instruction where it's like you sit down next, you know, across the table from a kid and you pull up and you say, I have a brown cow. And the kid says, I have a, you know, blue ball and it's just, um... and like, let's move to the kids that are really impaired. Like they're talking maybe one to three word phrases. That's another thing. It's like, people think like length of utterance is so important and then it's very rote and it's very awkward like you said. And so do you see a lot of that and do you see problems with undoing that when they get to your center?

Ashley: I absolutely see a ton of that and that's primarily what we spend our time doing with our teens, is undoing well-meaning instruction. They come in with have very splintered skill set, a very awkward skill set, um, walking up to other kids and

introducing themselves, tapping a kid on the shoulder, kids with, with more advanced skills... Um, why I love what we do here is that we have a very large developmental playgroup model. So to me, that's my chance now to focus on all the things I wish everybody else focused on for the teens that are coming in.

Ashley: And as you mentioned things have really evolved. So I do think that those foundational, you know, like social responding targets are becoming more of a focus, um, in our, in our EI programs, but absolutely was not with my kids who are, you know, 15 or 16 now. That just wasn't happening. So in our center we have the developmental playgroup and then we have our traditional social skills for to check and talk more about, you know, a BST model.

Mary: Can you define what a BST is because we...?

Ashley: Absolutely, so BST stands for Behavior Skills Training, um, and that's a treatment package which involves instruction, modeling, rehearsal and feedback. So if you think about that instruction component, the kids need to have a good amount of language skills. So if I'm talking to a student who falls within the whole one VB-MAPP or level two, absolutely not an appropriate candidate for BST, I would be talking at them. It's very, very poor use of their time.

Ashley: At that point I'm looking more for embedded discrete trials. So it's gonna look very different. Um, teaching interaction procedure, very similar to the BST. But with that you explained to them the rationale, what is the social skill and why should you use it, what happens if you don't use it? Examples and non-examples. So again, for kids to be great candidates for that social group, there are a ton of prerequisite skills. We're talking, you're done with VB-MAPP at that point. But those are not all the kids that are out there. So you can't possibly just fall into our developmental playgroup model where you're ages three through six with emerging language, or you fall into are very formal, advanced quote unquote traditional social skills group.

Ashley: What about all those kids who have limited language and are older adolescents, teens? Do we just not, we just not serve them? And I wasn't a okay with that because that's a population in which I primarily worked throughout, throughout all this time. So we need to have some sort of service for them. What is that service going to look like? What's going to be most beneficial? It's going to be an appropriate and valuable use of their time. And that tends to look more like a leisure skills model for us. So what leisure skills can I teach which will increase your opportunity to join in with others and for others to join you?

Ashley: You don't have to have a conversation to play air hockey or to play basketball or you know, other games like that. That's also where I jump out of the play skills hierarchy. So with our earlier learners, I follow that very carefully of how I'm

scaffolding or advanced... Pretend play for example is very advanced. Where I skip ahead our teens, again, who come in with limited leisure skills. Then I am jumping to things like board games and card games, which would be considered cooperative play, is a more advanced level, but we have to have some sort of skills repertoire so they can engage socially with others.

Ashley: You know, if it's a population of kids who may be living in a uh, you know, a group home or something like that, what skills would they need to be able to interact with other successfully in that setting? So really thinking about long term, the bigger picture, how can they spend time with their families at, at home and be involved? So I really try to keep that picture in mind and build the skill set there.

Mary: So for a child, no matter what age, if they are speaking in one word phrases or a couple word phrases but very, you know, limited language, limited following directions. For those of the people listening that understand VB-MAPP, you know, VB-MAPP level one or two. So that's really only up to an 18 month old or 30 month old developmentally and language wise. Would you, what would you suggest that the goals for social abilities be and what would the social skill instruction look like? If at all.

Ashley: Sure. So I'm really working hard and in every group to condition attention as a reinforcer. We've really tried to limit and even completely remove any sort of tangible reinforcement that's not related to that task; not using any sort of edibles or anything like that in any our programs. So then we need to make sure that we are sufficiently paired with reinforcement that the kids want to be here in this environment, that we've paired them with the materials with reinforcement and prepare ourselves as adults and you know, quote unquote play partners with reinforcement. So that's a heavy, heavy emphasis, really working on getting that functional and purposeful eye contact, and imitation as well. We learn so much through imitation. So really a watch-and-do type of model.

Ashley: We also need to make sure that the kids can fill independent leisure time. If you're home and you have a 16 year old that you need to watch every second of the day and you can't shower and you can't cook dinner, you have a major problem. So, um, we are focusing on that as well. Keep yourself productively and safely busy, but at the same time, I don't want them to just rotely following an activity schedule and getting no enjoyment from it. That's not play. That's not what leisure is supposed to be. Could that look good? Wow. You know, Johnny fills an hour of his time, he flips through his binder and he goes and gets his materials. But I'm really looking at effect. You know, I, I want to know that the kids are enjoying what they're doing. Otherwise it's just work, it's demands. That's not at all the definition of leisure skill.



- Ashley: So it's harder on our part because we have to do a lot of observation. What are the kids doing when they're not engaged? That tells you a lot of information about where they're getting reinforcement. How can you take some of those concepts, turn it into more functional play? How can you start to join in? How can that become something that's not just sitting, just you know, restricted behaviors or stereotyping. So a lot of observation, a lot of analysis and a lot of gradually in putting yourself in activities and expanding upon them to become more functional without losing that enjoyment factor.
- Mary: I know that you do a lot of work with grouping kids. So if you get a 12 year old who was speaking in one word utterances or a three year old that's speaking in one word utterances... those are two very different groups. Even though they have the same language ability, maybe. But the three year-old's not as far behind language-wise, and teaching a three year old to do certain things does not look as odd as trying to teach a 12 year old, you know, so. So how would you approach a three year old coming into your center with one to three word utterances versus a 12 year old?
- Ashley: Sure. So that's a great question because like you mentioned, it's very, very different even though they may present the same in terms of language abilities. So our developmental playgroup is the only model which is, is really truly gripped by age. That's going to be our three to five year olds and it's.. we do a circle time, or parachute play, ball play, toy play...
- Mary: So like a little preschool type of model.
- Ashley: It looks very, very much... Absolutely. It's very, very much like preschool. We're just doing no academics. Every single thing we do is focused on pairing peers with reinforcement, teaching toy play, approaching adults. Certainly not pulling out a parachute with a teenager. Inappropriate.
- Ashley: So when we get to that level, I'm also not grouping all of the kids together. So I'm not having a whole entire group of level two VB-MAPP teens. That's where our groups now look like an inclusion group. So I may pull, um, you know, we'll get a new applicant, I look at that profile and I think, okay, I'm going to put them in a group of students that may have more advanced skills. Now their program is going to become highly individualized. They may be all together during some free time activities, or focusing on teaching sports clubs or different activities... Things like strong peer models who are going to be able to support them in that play and are going to be able to respond to them and be able to reinforce any reinforcement any new skill where other peers who have such significant deficits aren't going to be able to reinforce, you know, if they greet somebody for the first time they would be ignored. They would be ignored in another group.

- Ashley: But then what happens is... I can't keep that individual with more delayed skills with a more advanced group for the entire time, because they're not benefiting from that instructional model when it comes to teaching the actual like social skills component. So that's when they're going to pull...
- Mary: That's kind of when you are saying, okay that model and, and this is like the explanation for if you tap somebody on the shoulder and you know it's like in the meeting space and stuff, but a child, even if they're that age, they're not going to understand that. And that's why inclusion for VB-MAPP level two and three kids who are, you know, older... Teens, you know they can go to music class and they can shake the maracas and even maybe shake their maracas to a beat and stuff, but when you start talking about Mozart and all that language, it is way too much language and they're not going to benefit.
- Mary: So what it sounds like you do is you might push in for the, for the hands-on part of the activity, but then pull out for one to one when you're explaining a higher level than they're going to understand,
- Ashley: Right. When it comes to the actual instructional piece or lesson piece, we're going to see the group separate according to their specific areas of strength and need. I was nodding my head physically when you were talking about the inclusion model of throwing kids into settings when they just don't have the prerequisite skills to be successful. I never see that go well. I see kids engaging in problem behavior that typically don't because there's just a lack of stimulation. They don't understand what's going on. They're not accessing enforcement. If anything, you're alienating them more from their peers rather than helping to bridge that gap or form relationships.
- Ashley: So with anything like that, I always ask what is the ultimate goal, and what steps are you taking to achieve that, that goal? And start there and then work your way up. Don't... We want to set the kids up for success. We don't want to throw them in and have them flail around drowning in a setting that's not appropriate for them.
- Mary: Right. And a lot of your programming takes place afterschool, or does all of your program take place after school?
- Ashley: All of it does. Yup. All of our kids are in full day school programs, so we are busy, you know, from 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM Monday through Friday. And then Saturday mornings are a very busy time for us as well because a lot of our kids will also then still get some in home services or they have speech or OT throughout the week as well, especially our very little ones. So historically our developmental playgroup will always run on a Saturday morning because the kids just have very full schedules during during the week, and on a Saturday you're trying to keep

your three year old busy and you're running out of ideas. So let's be, you know, appropriately and functionally busy here. Like let's learn some new skills front on a Saturday.

Mary: So during the days you are busy with planning for these groups, planning the curriculum, planning the activities and there's a ton of work behind the scenes that you, and potentially members of your staff too, are working on. And it's just, it amazes me how much work good social skill instruction takes.

Ashley: Yes. I think people vastly underestimate the amount of administrative time that goes into actually running this program. I will see other programs sort of pop up and then disappear because I think people just thinking maybe look, look easy. Oh they come for an hour, an hour and a half a week. They may access direct service for an hour and a half a week, but it's three times that that goes into planning for that group. And for us specifically, I do not allow our instructors to plan their, we call it sessions, so I'll back up a minute here. Our social group program will run in sessions at 10 to 14 weeks dependent upon the time of year. So a family will, they'll be offered placement to a unquote what we referred to as the best fit group and if they form makes up that that placement they'll be good and then they're with us for that entire session.

Ashley: As we near the end we will make our recommendations. Do you stay with this group? Do you transition to restricted group with different peers to work on a different skill set or for generalization? So lots of opportunities for movement within our, within our program.

Ashley: Why I mentioned the sessions is that I don't allow our instructors to plan their entire session. There's no pre-planning allowed. You need to plan the week after you finish for the next week. And the reason we do that is because we're making data driven decisions. So you need to know exactly how that child did those activity to determine what activity you're going to be moving onto next. What does remain structure consistent for me is the routine of it. So I mentioned earlier that our groups will have a global focus, so it's typically four or five skills that we are targeting every single week. We do not run a program in which it's something like week one sportsman, week two friendship, you don't learn... How on earth would you learn to be a good friend in one week?

Ashley: So if sportsmanship is an issue, tolerating losing, not being first, you are going to need lots of opportunities for practice and I don't think 12 weeks is too much. And you know what, if you master a part of that then we move to the next thing. But sportsmanship for example, the global focus groups, so we would have four types of activities we will do every single week to align with that global focus. So they may always do a conversational conversation activity. If kids are working on making more comments, asking follow-up questions. We may always do a

collaborative activity if working as a team is an issue. We may always do a nonverbal communication or prospective taking activity.

Ashley: So again, whatever that global focus is, we develop that structure and routine for the group, we're then embedding activities within week to week that fit in with the activities. But I don't allow those activities to be embedded until one week is finished, and you determine what's appropriate for the next week. If you think about cooperative play, you can go from introductory cooperative play to very advanced, they add in strategy and all sorts of other things. So we want to follow, again, data driven decisions.

Mary: So I know that you also have part of your businesses is you, so some of these curriculum or of these ideas more as a package and where can people look into what you have available and potentially purchase it? Because I think what you're saying is, it sounds cutting edge state of the art, you know, very time consuming and everything. But I guess my thing is how can we get these techniques that you've worked so hard to design and make state of the art? How can we get them to seminate it out to people from various parts of the world? And so where can people look into your resources for either free or for purchase?

Ashley: Sure. So we don't have a curriculum available because I have yet to find something extensive enough to cover everything. You really need to get to know all of the kids as individuals and then take our understanding of ABA as a science, and develop that at treatment package. So what I would suggest for folks, professionals who are interested in developing a social skills program or expanding an existing service, we do offer distance consultation through our office here. So that would involve setting a conference up with me. And again, all of those packages are individualized based on the size of the company or sort of where you are in that process of growing or starting. So you could just reach out to us via email. So it's team T E A M, [missioncognition@gmail.com](mailto:missioncognition@gmail.com).

Ashley: Twice a year we also do an in-house intensive weekend. So we do that in October and we do that in March. We cap it at a small group and this is for again, professionals who are in charge of the social skills programs within the companies they own. We work very hands on, very comprehensive. Two full days of, what are social skills, how are we vocalizing this, what are play skills? And okay great. That sounds awesome. On paper, how do you actually do that? How do you actually write out instruction when the kids aren't in front of your face? So folks very serious about growing their programs, I would absolutely encourage them to, you know, follow us on Facebook, you know when those dates are.

Ashley: In terms of the materials, we do provide some script. So again, you would have needed to do that assessment. So that would be [missioncognition-share.com](http://missioncognition-share.com).

There's also a couple of blog posts up there up there as well. So by all means, you know, take a browse and hopefully something is useful.

Mary: So it is mission cognition, is there...

Ashley: So we have two sites, right? So for a family in our area to add services, they want their child to participate in group go to [missioncognition.com](http://missioncognition.com). You'll fill out an application, we'll help you through all the steps. If you are a parent who's looking to work with your child at home, or you're a professional who owns a program, we have the sensor site where you can access additional resources. That would be [mission-cognition-share.com](http://mission-cognition-share.com)

Mary: Okay. [Mission-cognition-share.com](http://Mission-cognition-share.com), that is for your resources and to possibly...

Ashley: We have blog posts, right.

Mary: Right. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. So that sounds great. So what do you think are... Part of this podcast is the goal is so that parents and professionals can be less stressed and lead happier lives. Do you have any advice for practices or activities that you do or you recommend to create less stress and to be happier?

Ashley: I love that question. First I would say have fun. You know, life is very stressful. So try to find that connection or that activity with your child you do feel is reciprocal, where you can both get enjoyment from it.

Ashley: Also, when you look at your goals, it can be very overwhelming. We need to target this, we need to target that, just look at one thing at a time, consistently practice it, and once you're successful with that, you feel a renewed sense of, you know, I've got this and you're ready to tackle the next thing. Don't feel every second of your day has to be so demand focus. There's a lot of value in having fun and just relaxing. And skills are taught. Yeah. That as well. Relationship building is so much, so don't put so much pressure on yourself.

Mary: Yeah, I think that's great. Well, thank you so much. I know we need to wrap it up, but I do think that, um, teaching social skills, being aware that social skills isn't just an easy thing you add to an IEP or that you teach, especially with kids with severe language delays and issues, it's going to be complicated. I think you're a great resource who has come up with a lot of different avenues to help these kids and you're constantly growing and learning and innovating so that we can really make a difference to turn things around for kids with autism, whether they are, you know, very severely impacted or very high language and fully conversational, there still will continue to be social skills to work on. So thank you very much for taking your time today to teach us all about social skills.

Ashley: My pleasure. Thank you for having me.

Mary: All right. Talk to you soon.

*Thanks for listening to the Turn Autism Around podcast with Dr. Mary Barbera.  
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