First Responder Training Video Script

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Doug Flutie Introduction

Hi, I'm Doug Flutie. I'd like to thank you for participating in this autism training program. Over one million people in the United States currently suffer from the symptoms of autism spectrum disorder. This developmental disability knows no racial, ethnic or economic boundaries. My own son Dougie was diagnosed with autism in 1994.

During the next twenty minutes we'll discuss how to safely recognize, approach and communicate with an autistic person. Many symptoms of autism can be difficult to detect and are intensified during stressful or emergency situations.

Programs like this can help children and adults with autism feel more at home in their neighborhoods. With your help, those with autism can become welcome, contributing members of our community.

Doug Flutie Conclusion (Generic Version)

I hope you found this program informative. If you would like additional information on autism and its symptoms, please contact the organizations listed below. On behalf of myself, the Autism Alliance and the Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation, I thank you for watching.

Doug Flutie Conclusion (Training Version)

I hope you found this program informative. You should receive a package today that includes information, biographies and pictures of the children with autism in your community.

If you would like additional information on autism and its symptoms, please contact the organizations listed below. On behalf of myself, the Autism Alliance and the Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation, I thank you for watching.

Definition of Autism – (For narration and on-screen text)
Autism is a complex developmental disability that affects the functioning of the brain.

Individuals with autism have trouble with verbal as well as non-verbal communication and often struggle with the most common social interactions.

Different groups or regions of the country may refer to autism by various names such as:

- Aspergers Syndrome
- Pervasive Developmental Delay or PDD
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Childhood Disintegrative Disorder
- Or just Autism

Over one million Americans today are believed to have some form of autism. That makes autism the third most common developmental disability in the United States.

Autism's severity can vary depending on the individual. Skills, traits and behaviors may differ greatly based on the condition.

Autism may have a pronounced effect on an individual's:

- Language and communication skills
- Sensory processing
- Emotional state
- Motor skills

Because of their condition, individuals with autism:

- Are often unable to communicate
- Appear to be under the effects of drugs or alcohol
- Can wander off without notice creating emergency situations

Parent Narrator/Host Introduction (On-screen host using teleprompter)

As you arrive at a scene, how can you recognize an individual with autism? I'm Allison Daigle. I'm a member of the Autism Alliance and a parent of a child with autism. Today I'd like to discuss some of the common traits and behaviors associated with autism.

Common Traits (On-screen host, switch to b-roll, narration with bullets)

Although each person is unique, here are several common traits of autism:

- They may be over stimulated by bright lights, sounds or even smells
- They may exhibit little or no eye contact
- And can be non-verbal, non-responsive or appear belligerent
- Individuals may react harshly to any change in routine

This is not intentional behavior.

Examples of Behavior (For narration and on-screen text)

Other characteristics of autism include:
* Having a strong attachment to inanimate objects
* Appearing to be under the effects of alcohol or drugs
* In fact, individuals with autism may take medication for variety of conditions

Additional characteristics include:
* Repeating questions and speaking in a monotone voice
* Appearing overly anxious or having little sense of danger, pain or fear
* And having an attraction to bodies of water is also common
    Drowning is the number one cause of death for children with autism.

Let's observe a few people with autism. The people featured here have varying degrees of autism. As you watch the following segments, notice the distinctions in their behavior.

(Cut to B-roll of five children)

You may encounter the following behaviors when dealing with a person with autism:

* Exhibiting anxiety by flapping hands, hitting oneself or screaming
* Not recognizing police vehicle or officers
* Not understanding what is expected in an emergency situation
* And answering yes to any and all questions

Additional behaviors you may encounter include:
* Being unable to provide important information
* Changing the subject of conversation when spoken to
* Not understanding personal space boundaries
* Very honest – even blunt responses to questions

You may also observe extreme reactions to physical contact. For example, touching a person with autism can trigger aggressive or defensive behavior.

If you suspect autism, try to avoid being overly physical with a subject initially – especially children.

Additional assistance may be needed to safely resolve a situation.

As a situation escalates, your approach is critical. A person with autism may be highly sensitive to:
* Patrol lights and sirens
* Canine partners
* Flashlights
* Even odors

If you suspect there is a person with autism at a scene, if at all possible try to minimize these elements when approaching.

Approaching/Communicating (On-screen host)

Once at the scene, you may recognize an individual exhibiting autistic behavior. Here are several suggestions for effectively making contact.

First, open-ended questions are often difficult for a person with autism to process. Talking in direct, literal phrases is effective while abstract phrases are often misunderstood. Phrases like: "Are you pulling my leg?" are confusing to people with autism.

Closed sentence structures are easier for people with autism to comprehend Fill in the blank phrasing such as, "Your name is…?" or "Your address is…?" can start a dialog.

Repeating comments or commands and giving extra time for responses may be necessary. This approach allows a person with autism the time needed to process information. And if speaking to a child, assume the child's posture.

Evaluating for injury - an individual with autism may not ask for help even if seriously injured and may have an unusually high tolerance for pain.

Use non-threatening body language and speech when possible. Avoid touching, especially near the shoulders and face.

Avoid stopping repetitive behaviors like hand flapping unless it is causing injury.

And examine for ID tags or medical alert information in unusual locations. People with autism may tear at traditional medical jewelry therefore these items may be located on shoe tags, belt clips, backpacks or necklaces.

Individuals may also use picture cards to communicate. Here are some typical examples:

(B-Roll of picture cards)

Finally, many people with autism rely on sign language to communicate. Here are some of the more common signs and their meaning:

(On-Screen Host to demonstrate common sign language phrases)

INSERT (Doug Flutie Closing Remarks)

Narration Summary (On-screen text)

Autism Statistics
- Developmental disability affecting brain function
- Over one million Americans effected
- Third most common U.S. developmental disability

Common Traits
- Often unable to communicate
- Appear to be under effects of drugs or alcohol
- Hypersensitive to lights, sounds and smells
- Strong attraction to water

Typical Characteristics
- Attachment to inanimate objects
- Speak in a monotone voice
- Exhibit little or no eye contact

Common Behaviors
- Flapping and twirling hands
- Answering yes to all questions
- Frequently changing subject of conversation
- Extreme reactions to physical contact

Making Contact
- Use literal phrases
- Avoid abstract language
- Use closed sentence structures
- Repeat questions and commands
- Allow non-dangerous, repetitive behaviors