

Theraplay & Behavior Therapy Principles for Assisting Youth on The Autism Spectrum Energia Conference 2022

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Why Are You Taking This Training?

- You are a teacher therapist interested in Autism
 - You are a therapist working with Youth who are Autistic
 - You are a parent with a youth on the spectrum
 - You are a director or camp supervisor interested in being integrative
 - You are just like fun games
 - You accidentally wandered in here and just want to hang out
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- Whatever your reason, I welcome you, there will be something in the class for you!

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe the impact autism spectrum disorders (ASD) have across life domains;
2. Identify the social needs for youth with ASD;
3. Apply Theraplay principles and activities and Behavior principles to address the core social skill needs for youth with ASD;
4. Know how to use at least 3 therapeutic games specific to youth with ASD.

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Video #1: Mom Interacting with Son



- Write down your observations about Social Interaction?



- Poor communication
- Lack of agreement on the agenda
- Limited social reciprocity
- Lack of responsiveness to social cues
- Limited repertoire of joint play activities
- Others.....



- What challenges are this boy and his mother faced with? (Write down your thoughts)

Functioning is Globally Affected Across Life Domains

- Community Integration
- Adaptive Skills for Daily Living (ADL's)
- Communication
- Recreation
- Social-Behavioral Interaction



The Functional Areas Overlap Due To The Social Component

- Communication affects social interaction
- Communication and behavior problems impede community integration
- Poor self-care or domestic skills affect social interaction and safety



It Is On a Spectrum...

Mild Features

- Mild social awkwardness
- Misses some social cues
- Tends to have very intense interests and focus "excessively" on them
- Mild sensory hypersensitivity in one or two modalities

Severe Features

- Severe social deficits
- Unable to read facial expressions
- Literal interpretation of language
- Possible absence of language
- Many repetitive motor movements
- Incapacitating sensory overload

The Spectrum Interacts with Intellectual Skills

High Cognitive Skill

- Exceptional memory
- Exceptional Academic Skills in an area(s):
 - Math
 - Chemistry
 - Engineering
 - Cell Biology
 - Logic
- Advanced Language knowledge

Low Cognitive Skills

- Impaired reasoning
- Severe academic delays globally
 - Lack of abstraction
 - Unable to read or do math
- Absence of language

Social Functioning is Crucial



- As socially engaged animals, our surviving and thriving is tied to social relatedness
 - Connect with others
 - Read social cues
 - Respond to cues appropriately

Most of Life Fits Into a Social Engagement Context

- Work success involves teams...and politics
- Relationship success...Friends and Romance
- Social success includes making people feel safe around you
- Social Recreation involves everything in life





Theraplay Can Help

- Theraplay is inherently social
- Theraplay encourages reciprocal play and cooperation
- Theraplay facilitates communication
- Theraplay is about connection, engagement, reciprocal nurture, and tolerating to enjoying fun challenges

Theraplay®

Video #2 Theraplay with Zoey

- Write down a few observations...

Discussion of Video #2 Theraplay with Zoey

- Started with Imitation
- Simple and noncompetitive
- Social reciprocity was emphasized
- Turn taking was involved
- Encourage responses that are close and shape the skill
- Directive and planned, but adapt to the youth's responses
- Other?.....

Rapport Building with Child for Safety and Connection

- Youth with ASD tend to build relationships more slowly than peers, so plan for more time.
- Spend time with them in the presence of a preferred, safe teacher, parent, or staff
- Expect nervousness or resistance with a new environment or new activities
- Be directive, assertive, and confident, but also be flexible

Expanding the Child's Recreational Repertoire

- Promote social connection
- Reduce opportunities to disconnect
- Broaden activities child knows and is willing to do



- Expanding these skills are critical to success

Expanding the Repertoire: Notes

- Experimentation
- Individual sessions
- Present an activity a variety of times
- Start at the most basic level with high physical support
- Integrate OT, classes, and interest surveys

Improving Family Relationships Is a Critical Goal

- Help youth and parent expand what they enjoy together
- Help youth and siblings enjoy more fun games together
- Increase the skills of siblings and parents to enjoy time with the family member
- Improve everyone's sense of safety
- Improve everyone's ability to communicate

Therapy With Luke And His Family

- Luke had already had a lot of Applied Behavior Analysis and Behavior Therapy
- He was in residential care due to aggressive behavior
- Family activities with him were limited
- It was not safe for the family to take him on outings

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Video #3 Luke and Family

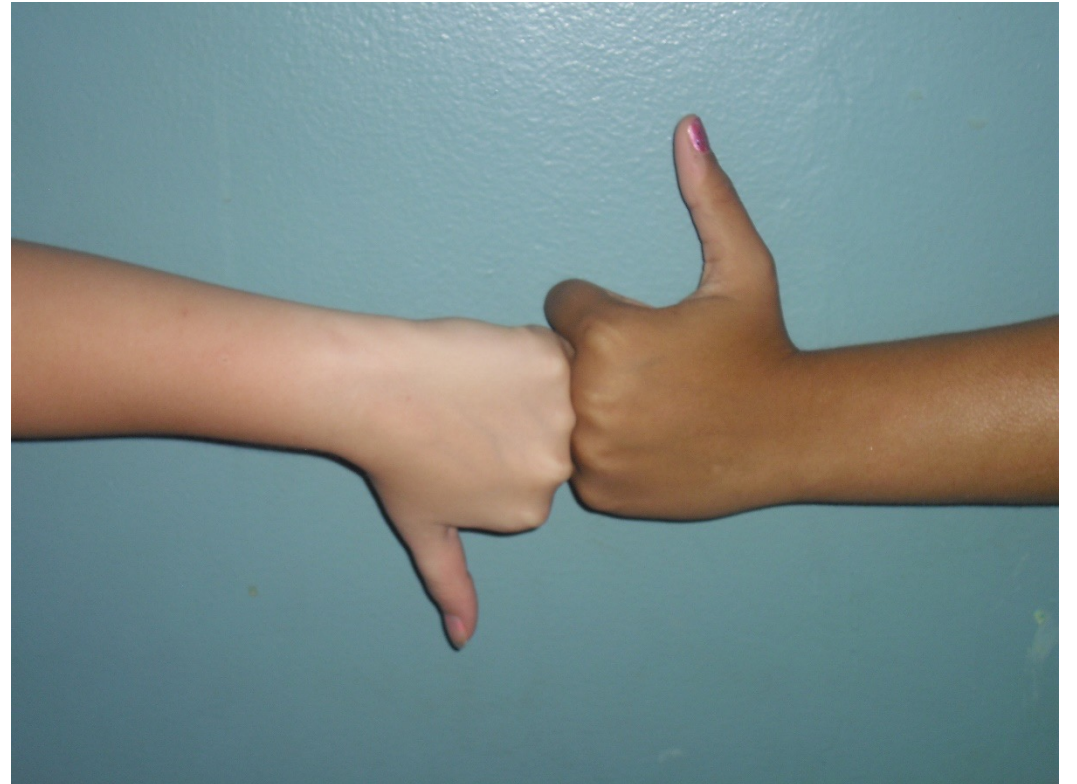
Luke: Safety, Communication, Structure, Repertoire Building

- Picture Schedule used to create expectations = safety
- Time outdoors with sports was meaningful to everyone
- Multiple activities increased the repertoire
- Time indoors helped generalize play skills across different settings

Video #4 Last Day of Therapy With Luke

Family Connection with Child

- Connection is the #1 priority
 - If the family feels disconnected their overall life engagement with the youth declines.
 - The problem is often a mismatch between normal adult expectations and the social level of the child



Intrinsic versus Extrinsic Motivation

- **Extrinsic Motivators** are highly tangible things like food, toys, tokens, books, videos. They are external to the person and external to the relationship
- **Intrinsic Motivators** are nontangible and internal things like sense of love, caring, and enjoyment of a relational activity.

Intrinsic Motivation: Social Connection Is Powerful For Behavior Change

- Sense of caring for another person motivates one to make good choices that avoid hurting others
- Social connection is longer lasting and more powerful than external things that break and are used up
- Social interaction reward apply across all life activities.

Video #5: Dad's Comment About Motivation and Relationship

Debrief & Analysis

- Write down the activities from videos that looked most appealing to you
- Describe the activities you can see yourself using in your own therapy sessions

Social Skills Practice in a Natural Way

- Much behavioral social skills training is in a very rote, mechanical instructional style.
- Theraplay works on social skills through the game like format
- Youth often have so much done TO them, they haven't learned the skill and enjoyment of reciprocity



Social Skills Through Theraplay Activities

- Clappers (call and response format and together format, promoting reciprocity)
- 3-legged race (working with and adjusting one's body to another person)
- Paint prints (creative, sensory, practice of hand washing)

Video #6 Examples of Games

Questions:

What questions do you have about ...

- Autism?
- Theraplay Activities?
- Working with Parents?
- Integrating with other types of therapy?

Other Potential Topics And Areas To Integrate Into Treatment

- Use of the Marschak Interaction Method (MIM) as a tool for both assessment and therapeutic intervention
- Sensory Activities and taking ideas from occupational therapy to use in Theraplay.
- Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and using the information to create plans that work for specific problems
- Role Play and teaching imaginary play to higher functioning youth



**KEEP
CALM
BECAUSE
ITS THE
END**



But there are some
gifts....

Humming Games

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Making a Humming Sound : Sitting in a circle, suggest that you all hum together. Demonstrate with “mmm”, then have all do it together. Sequence of humming can be conducted as follows with any variation you can think of:

1. As a group see how long you can hummmmm for (timing ends when last person is out of air);
 2. See who can hummmmm the longest (only once or twice);
 3. Hum different vowel sounds ('a', 'e', 'i', 'o', 'u'). Vary the frequency, such as high pitch or low pitch. Once people can do different pitches, try starting low and then stepping upward or vice versa. It is best if they follow your lead: you must be loud enough they can hear the increase or decrease;
 4. For the musically inclined there is no limit to variations on loudness or harmony. For most, it is enough to experience humming in tune with a group.
- There is a sense of calm focus and group connection when humming goes harmoniously well.

CLAPPER THERAPY

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1. Just Clap & Flap: Bring out clapper and start clapping it, distracts youth and is hypnotic to those with repetitive flapping interests.
2. Clap On-Clap Off: Youth puts out hands face up—do clapping on hands, then trade & have youth do clapping on your hands.
3. You Clap-I Clap: Do some clapping rhythm for the youth, then have youth do a clapping rhythm for you—work on reciprocity and turn taking.
4. Clapper Sensory Massage: Do the clappers on back and shoulders of youth. For reciprocity practice have them do to you (or parent).
5. Follow the Rhythm: Do a simple rhythm and have youth imitate, increase complexity; try to do the rhythms at the same time.
6. Clap the Feeling: Communicate a feeling with the rate and rhythm of the clapper, and go back and forth with musical feeling communication. Can do as feeling charades.
7. Spontaneous Praise with Clapper: Youth does something good, whip out clapper and yell 'Hooray' while clapping the clapper. Give specific praise.
8. Cold & Hot: Find a hidden item in room—clapping intensity communicates if one is getting closer or further away.

FEATHER THERAPY

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1. Feather Catch: Partners have hands cupped for catching and blowing. With your hands very close to the child or parent gently blow the feather into hands. Cue child to blow it back to your hands. Being close guarantees success.
2. Feather Circle: Same as above in family or group; the feather is gently blown from person to person around the circle.
3. Decoration: Decorate the child with multicolored feathers.
4. Matching: Parent-child take turns putting matching feather on each other. Once fully decorated take a picture of them together.
5. Feather Massage: Child relaxes with arms out. Therapist or parent gently strokes the arm and hand with the feather. Child can be eyes open or closed depending on trust level.
6. Sensory Guess: With partner eyes open demonstrate the feel of a feather. With partner eyes closed the partner gently touch hand, arm, face with feather and person says where you touched. For increased partner interest, test feel of different feathers or contrast feel of feather versus brush, cotton ball, or other materials.