Facilitating Skill Development for Young Children with Autism Using Daily Routines

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Disclosure
I receive royalties from two books upon which this presentation is based.

Presentation Objectives
▶ Identify ways to provide support to families whose infants or toddlers have autism or are suspected of having autism
▶ Describe the relationship among the core deficits of autism
▶ Identify ways to help caregivers facilitate skill development throughout daily routines related to the core deficits of autism
Supporting Families from Suspicion to Diagnosis

- Starting the discussion
- After the diagnosis
- Family stress
- Cultural considerations
- Hope and optimism

Starting the Discussion

- Ask if anyone has expressed concerns about behaviors, e.g. lack of flexibility or lack of eye contact
- Talk about some of the child’s strengths
- Talk about the specific behaviors that are areas of concern
- Use materials (such as fact sheets) that talk about early behaviors associated with autism so the parents know you are basing the discussion on facts, not feelings.
- Make it a discussion, pause for person to think and respond
- Watch for person’s reaction in voice and body language to decide how to proceed


Building Family Competence and Coaching

- Family-centered supports and services for infants/toddlers with special needs are both recommended and evidence-based practices in EI
- Strengthen child-caregiver relationship
- Build caregiver’s confidence and competence to help the child learn in everyday routines
- Focus on things that are important to the family

Making Decisions about Treatment Approaches

- Continuum from developmental strategies to behavioral intervention
- Treatment recommendations for infants and toddlers vary greatly
- Important to consider child’s environment, family’s skills, coaching to achieve 25 hours of active engagement


Family Stress

- Getting the diagnosis
- Putting together services
- Learning the vocabulary
- Shift in parent roles
- Concerns re: time management, balancing work with child’s needs
- Multiple children with needs
- Child’s behaviors

Cultural Considerations

Culture may impact family’s understanding of autism, perception of disability, expectations for the child and interactions with the child.

Hope and Optimism

Hope and optimism have been correlated with positive outcomes with children with ASD

- Address child’s problems directly rather than avoid “triggers”
- Support family in routines that are challenging
- Problem solve solutions with the family


Embedding Principles of Behavior and Teaching Strategies Into Routines Based Intervention

- Motivation and Reinforcement
- Task Analysis
- Shaping and Prompting
- Repetition
- Generalization

(Data Collection and Progress Monitoring)

Motivation and Reinforcement

- What is important to the family?
- What does the child like to do?
- What interactions evoke smiling and laughing?
- How can we become valued?
- Can we use the child’s preferences and strengths to attain new skills?
Reinforcer Effectiveness

- Immediacy
- Contingency
- Magnitude
- Variability
- Deprivation


Task Analysis

- Helps determine steps needed to attain goal.
- Should be tailored to individual strengths and needs.
- Helps maintain consistency and predictability.

Shaping and Prompting

- Reinforcing successive approximations for each step of the task analysis moves child closer to the targeted skill.
- Prompt fading is essential for independent mastery of the skill.
- Prompt dependency reflects teaching missteps.

Repetition

► How can we arrange the environment to get repetition?
► How can we get many repetitions in a short amount of time?

Generalization

► Essential for independent, functional use of the skill.
► Over-generalization: avoid and remedy through the use of varied examples and non-examples.
Making Sense of Self, Others, and the Environment: What is It?

- Sense of Self
- Sensory Processing
- Self-awareness
- Affordance
- Theory of Mind
- Understanding Others’ Intentions
- Motor Planning

SENSORY CONTINUUM

Hypo-responsive/Under-reactive

Vision, Hearing, Taste, Touch, Smell, Proprioception—Deep pressure (receptors are in the tendons, muscles, and joints), Vestibular (receptors are in the inner ear)

Hyper-responsive/Over-reactive
Making Sense of Self, Others, and the Environment: Why is it Important?

Influences what we do to occupy ourselves and our interactions with objects and with others.

Building Skills to Support Making Sense of Self, Others, and the Environment:

▶ Attends to Sensory Stimuli
▶ Tolerates Sensory Stimuli
▶ Shifts Attention
▶ Imitates Actions
▶ Follows Directions

Attending to sensory stimuli, tolerating sensory stimuli, shifting attention, imitating actions, and following directions.

Example of Routine in which Attends to Sensory Stimuli Is Embedded

Bath Time
▶ Auditory: Talk about body parts being washed, the warm water, and the bath toys. Make up a song about washing. Make silly sounds as you dry off the child.
▶ Olfactory: Use a variety of scented bath products.
▶ Tactile/Proprioceptive: Vary the pressure when washing and drying. Provide a massage after bath.
▶ Visual: Provide a variety of colors containers to fill and dump. Try tablets to change the color of the water, bubble bath, or blow bubbles.
Example of Routine in which Tolerates Sensory Stimuli Is Embedded

Community Outings
▶ Auditory: Describe sounds the child will hear such as an approaching siren or train.
▶ Gustatory: Provide tastes of new foods when going out to eat as some children are more willing to try foods at a restaurant.
▶ Olfactory: If walking by something that has an unpleasant smell, playfully say “yuck, that stinks!”
▶ Proprioceptive: Help the child jump over cracks in the sidewalk.
▶ Vestibular: For children who don’t like to swing, as a first step, put the child on your lap and sit on the swing without moving it.

Example of Routine in which Shifts Attention Is Embedded

Diapering and Dressing
▶ Show the child each item used in the diapering routine such as the diaper and the wipes and name them. If the child doesn’t look at the item, move the item to the child’s visual field and then to your mouth so the child looks at the item and then to you.
▶ When putting on the child’s socks and shoes, hold out the article of clothing and wait for the child to extend each foot. If the child does not do so, tap on his or her foot.
▶ Help the child shift attention to your voice by being playful and building anticipation such as “I’m going to… kiss your nose.”
Example of Routine in which Following Directions Is Embedded

**Book Time**
▶ “Get the bunny book.”
▶ “Turn the page.”
▶ “Touch the apple.”
▶ “Put the book away.”

Flexibility: What is It?
Flexibility: Why is it Important?

- Supports regulation
- Supports making predictions and acting upon the world
- Inflexibility can impact many routines
- DSM-5 “restrictive and repetitive patterns of behaviors”
  “insistence on sameness” “inflexible adherence to routines”
  “ritualized patterns of verbal or nonverbal behavior”


Building Skills to Support Flexibility

- Transitions
- Perseveration/Fixations

Example of Routine in which Flexibility is Embedded

Community Outings
- Vary the route taken when walking around the neighborhood.
- Vary walking and riding in a stroller or wagon.
- Vary the songs sung and videos watched when in the car.
- Vary who pushes the cart and the type of cart used in the store.
Social Communication: What is it?

- Social communication is the ability to use “language in interpersonally appropriate ways to influence people and interpret events” (Olswang, L. B., Coggins, T. E., & Timler, G. R., (2001). Outcome measures for school-age children with social communication problems. Topics in Language Disorders, 22(1), 50-73).
- Involves reciprocity, turn taking, and incorporates joint attention across people, places, routines, and activities

Social Communication: Why is it important?

- Supports learning and understanding nonverbal verbal communication
- Supports participating in communication turns and later, in conversation
- Supports play development with family and peers
- Impacts developmental growth and diversity of pragmatic functions (how the child uses language)
- Often replaces problem behaviors

Building Skills to Support Social Communication

- Looks into others’ eyes
- Initiates gestures, sounds and words
- Uses gestures for a variety of functions
- Uses words for a variety of functions
- Participates in multiple exchanges with gestures and/or words
Example of Routine in which **Looks into Others’ Eyes** Is Embedded

**Bath time/Dressing and Diapering**
- Play Peekaboo with a towel, clean diaper or the child’s clothing.
- Use predictable language and sensory-social games the child likes such as “I’m gonna tickle your belly…”
- When dressing the child, position him or her so he or she can easily see your face.

Example of Routine in which **Imitates Gestures, Sounds and Words** Is Embedded

**Household Activities**
- Wiping highchair tray: also provide a cloth for the child and as you wipe, say “wipe, wipe, wipe.”
- Watering the garden: model the sound of water running as you water and then hand the child the hose.
Example of Routine in which Uses Gestures For a Variety of Functions Is Embedded

Playtime
▶ Place some desired toys out of reach to encourage reaching or pointing to request.
▶ Embed gestures into pretend play such as those to represent sleeping, eating and drinking.

Example of Routine in which Uses Words For a Variety of Functions Is Embedded

Grooming and Hygiene
▶ When brushing the child’s hair or teeth, sing a song and pause for the child to fill in words such as “This is the way we brush your ____.”
▶ Ask “Now what?” when the child knows what comes next in the sequence.
Example of Routine in which Participates in Multiple Exchanges with Gestures and/or Words Is Embedded

Bed time

▸ Talk about events of the day that were fun for the child.

▸ Ask relevant questions and comment about the child’s statements.
Regulation: What is It?

- Definitions vary by field
- Influenced by temperament, mood, emotion, attention, motor reactivity, genetics, environment, experience.

Regulation: Why is it Important?

Needed for engagement, optimal learning, and successful interaction.
Building Skills to Support Regulation

▶ Determine the influences of Making Sense of Self, Others, and the Environment, Flexibility, and Social Communication.
▶ Help families and caregivers with strategies to prevent dysregulation.
▶ Help families and caregivers with strategies to regain regulation.

Dysregulation ➔ Challenging behaviors ➔ Determination of the function

The Function of Behavior:
Why We Do What We Do!

Reflexive Behavior: Emotional Release

To Get Something
To Escape/ Avoid Something
Sensory Stimulation
A Tangible Item/A Situation
Attention/Reaction
How Do We Know The Function?

The ABCs of behavior:

A: Antecedent=What happened before?
B: Behavior=What did the child do?
C: Consequence=What happened next?

During A Session, Billy Bit Four Times!

Why Did Billy Bite?

- He had an urge to put something in his mouth and your arm was right there.
- You transitioned to a new activity and he didn’t want to stop what he was doing.
- You and Mom were talking and he wanted some attention.
- You were playing with a toy he wanted and you didn’t give it to him.
- You took his hand to help him and he didn’t understand what you were doing.
The Function Of The Behavior Determines Strategies Needed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FUNCTION</th>
<th>STRATEGIES TO TRY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sensory and the urge to bite</td>
<td>Give something appropriate to bite</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulties with transitions</td>
<td>Give warnings, use transition items to help him know what is next, entice him to the next activity by using preferred items or jumping to get there</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicating the need for attention</td>
<td>Teach him appropriate ways to gain attention such as tapping others, pointing, giving, calling others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicating he wants something</td>
<td>Teach him to say or gesture “I want” or “my turn”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicating stop</td>
<td>Teach him to say or gesture “no” or “all done”; use shaping to help him learn that physical prompts are beneficial</td>
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Example of Routine in Which Dysregulation May Occur: Possible Reasons

Mealtime/Snack Time

▶ Making Sense of Self, Others, and the Environment: Child may not recognize thirst or hunger or may not like the feel of the bib or the straps on the highchair.
▶ Flexibility: Child may only want to eat foods of a certain color or only want a specific person to feed him or her.
▶ Social Communication: Child may not be able to communicate likes and dislikes regarding food or its presentation.

Eating Challenges and ASD

▶ Exact nature and prevalence estimates of eating problems in ASD are unknown though some have estimated near epidemic levels
▶ Food selectivity is the most common concern

Tips for Behavioral Feeding Challenges

▶ Consider skill deficits, flexibility issues, sensory preferences and aversions, and instructional control.
▶ Proceed slowly: start with tiny bites and tiny changes in size, texture, color, flavor.
▶ Use positive reinforcement.
▶ Work on “first ___, then ___” in other routines first and then use as a strategy for behavioral feeding challenges.
▶ Consider working on acceptance of being fed from utensils for a short time, even for a child who eats independently.

Putting It All Together: Facilitating Skills Across Developmental Domains and Targeting Core Deficits

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<tr>
<th>DOMAIN</th>
<th>CORE DEFICIT</th>
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<tr>
<td>COGNITIVE</td>
<td>MAKING SENSE OF SELF, OTHERS, AND THE ENVIRONMENT</td>
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<tr>
<td>COMMUNICATION</td>
<td>FLEXIBILITY</td>
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Recipe for Success


Staples For The Recipe For Success

- Begin with engagement and regulation as they are necessary for learning.
- Consider the function and the developmental appropriateness of challenging behavior when determining the consequence.
- When targeting communication, consider modalities and vocabulary that will be powerful in a variety of settings.
- Use the sequence of development as a framework, concentrating on foundation skills, filling in gaps from skill to skill, and using knowledge of ASD to guide outcomes and strategies.
- Embed learning in multiple routines across the day considering what is functional and practical.
- Plan for generalization by varying the people, the setting, the materials, the words, and the prompts that you are always cognizant of fading.
- Collaborate with all team members to ensure everyone is "on the same page" as much as possible.
- Choose meaningful and practical ways to measure progress.

THANK YOU! I WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU! BWSLP@AOL.COM