Increasing Independence through the Teaching of Adaptive Skills in Young Learners with ASD

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ASERT
Training Objectives

- The focus of this training is to train clinicians to increase specific adaptive skills in young children with ASD.

- Skills for the purpose of this power point will include adaptive repertoires (self help, household chores, etc.) for toddlers, preschoolers, and kindergarten aged children.

- Methods for breaking down skills and shaping/teaching behavior will reviewed, however, basic knowledge of Behavior Analysis is assumed.

- Suggestions on ways to most effectively transfer skills to the family will be discussed.

- Supports to increase success in acquiring new adaptive behaviors will be examined.
Adaptive Behavior

- Adaptive behavior refers to a person’s social responsibility and independent performance of daily activities (Educating Children with Autism, 2001)
  - Research dates back to the early 1960’s when researchers published an article in which behavior “new: behavior analysis procedures, including task analysis were utilized to teach a young boy to wear his glasses (Wolf et al., 1964).

- Since that time, behavioral interventions have been applied to building a wide variety of adaptive skills with varied populations of children and adults with developmental disabilities  
  (Educating Children with Autism, 2001)
Adaptive Behavior

- Levels of independence with adaptive skills vary depending on what is deemed socially acceptable for a particular age group, within a particular culture.

- Adaptive behavior is optimal when it enables an individual to successfully function in his or her environment, contact natural reinforcement effectively, and face the least amount of challenges.

- As part of a comprehensive assessment, clinicians measure adaptive behavior using various instruments and compare the functional abilities of a child to those of other children of similar age.
  - Vineland-II and Bayley-III. (Ray-Subramanian et al., 2011)

- Adaptive behavior can include communication, social, cognitive, leisure, self help, and daily living skills.
Adaptive Behavior

- Every human being must learn a set of skills that is beneficial for the environments and communities in which they live.

- Adaptive skills are stepping stones toward accessing and benefiting from local or remote communities. (Hume, Rachel, & Lantz 2009)
  - Increase environmental and safety awareness
  - Provide access to engage in a wider range of communicative/social interactions

- Adaptive skills have a high level of social validity.
Increasing Independence

- A frequent response class that is sometimes avoided in early autism services includes adaptive skills that can build independence for a young child.
  - Self-help areas such as eating, drinking, dressing, sleeping, bathing, grooming, and toilet training are developing each day in typically developing toddlers, preschoolers, and kindergarteners.
  - Daily living skills in which young children learn to take an active role in the daily routines of their families are also growing.

- Why are these important adaptive skills often missing in early autism treatment plans?
Why These Skills Often Get Missed

• Young learners with ASD often have difficulty engaging in appropriate self help and adaptive skills due to various factors that can include limited receptive language, low rates of cooperation, a lack of attention, under developed fine motor skills, weak imitation skills, weak motivation, and poor visual performance skills.  
  (Matson, Hattier, & Belva 2012)

• Challenging behaviors such as non-compliance, tantrums, aggression, off-task, & stereotypy can also interfere with acquisition

• Often, families and clinicians unintentionally make presumptions that a young child with ASD is not yet ready to learn these behaviors
Why These Skills Need to Be Included

- Regardless of a child’s level of functioning, it is essential to individualize behavior training for a child so that they can begin to learn how to take some responsibility in caring for themselves at a closer to age appropriate level.

- Teaching the child to become an active member of their family life will ultimately widen their access to communication and socialization opportunities and will increase the likelihood of more successfully integrating them into their home life

(Matson, Hattier, & Belva 2012)
This is what typical adaptive skills can look like....
Beginning to take care of oneself

- Self Feeding
- Drinking from a Cup
- Teeth brushing
- Washing hands and face
- Brushing/combing hair
- Following a bed time schedule
- Stable sleep schedule
- Dressing

- *Urination Training
- *Bowel Movement Training
- Blowing one’s nose
- Taking medicine from adult
- Putting on lip balm
- Tolerating finger nail clipping and sun screen application
- Throwing away trash

*These skills often include techniques that are beyond the scope of this training.
AGE-APPROPRIATE* chores for kids

**Toddler (ages 2–3)**
- Pick up/ put away toys
- Unload the dishwasher (silverware, plastic cups, tupperware)
- Dust with feather duster/microfiber rag
- Swiffer the floor
- Put clothes in the dirty clothes hamper
- Collect dirty clothes
- Help move clothes from washer to dryer
- Put clothes away
- Make bed
- Wipe cabinets
- Wipe baseboards (soapy water)

**Early Elementary (ages 6–8)**
- All previous chores
- Meal prep (wash produce, find ingredients, simple cutting)
- Wipe bathroom sinks, counters, toilets
- Hang out laundry
- Sweep
- Vacuum
- Collect garbage
- Get mail
- Fold/hang laundry
- Clean microwave
- Rake leaves

**Preschooler (ages 4–5)**
- All previous chores
- Load the dishwasher
- Vacuum couch/ chairs/ cushions
- Take out recycling
- Set table
- Clear table
- Wash dishes (with supervision)
- Clean windows
- Wipe out bathroom sinks
- Match socks
- Fold dish towels
- Weed
- Water indoor plants
- Feed pets

**Elementary (ages 9–11)**
- All previous chores
- Make simple meals
- Take garbage/recycling to the curb
- Wash/ dry clothes
- Clean toilets
- Mop floors

**Middle School (ages 12–14)**
- All previous chores
- Clean tub/ shower
- Make full meals/ meal plan
- Clean out fridge/ freezer
- Mow yard
- Supervise younger children’s chores

*You should take into account your child’s specific abilities and maturity level when assigning chores.
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Core Deficits in Young Children with ASD that Relate to Adaptive Skills

- Inconsistent motivation
- Low rates of cooperation
- A lack of attention
- Poor imitation skills
- Limited receptive and expressive language
- Underdeveloped motor skills
- Inability to complete task
- Poor visual performance skills

(Scheuermann & Webber 2002)
Remember the ABC’s!

- Adaptive behaviors can be analyzed through the Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence paradigm:
  - (ANTECEDENT): The natural (or contrived) occasion for the response
    - Motivative Operations
    - Prompting
  - (BEHAVIOR): The (ultimately) independent performance of the daily activity
  - (CONSEQUENCE): The natural consequences for the response (additional consequences may be added during the learning phase)
How do we “teach” the behavior?

- As simple as it may sound, remember to use a task analysis (including assessing skill level) that will clearly describe each step that is necessary to perform the behavior in the child’s natural environment.
Task Analysis

- Adaptive skills are usually taught through a process that begins with a task analysis, which breaks down a skill into its component parts (Haring and Kennedy, 1988)

- Instruction then proceeds through a process of teaching each component skill in small steps, and ultimately chaining the sequence of behaviors together (National Research Council 2003)
How do we “teach” the behavior?

- Identify your teaching methodology
  - Natural Environment Teaching
    - Milieu Teaching
    - Pivotal Response Training
  - Visual scheduling following
    - Pictorial, technology based
  - Video Modeling
    - Peer model, self modeling
  - Discrete Trial Training
    - Guided by a curriculum
  - Etc...there are currently numerous evidenced-based teaching approaches that utilize behavior analytic methods
    - Lubetsky, Handen, & McGonigle (2011)
How do we “teach” the behavior?

- Agree on prompting procedures and ways to prevent and correct errors if they occur
  - Errorless Teaching-addresses core skill deficits
  - Select prompts from known responses if possible (i.e. receptive, imitative, physical, visual, etc.)
  - Error Correction Procedures.

- Chaining- supports child to stay on task
  - Forward Chaining
  - Backward Chaining
  - Total Task Chaining
How do we “teach” the behavior?

- Shaping
  - Shaping through the use of Differential Reinforcement
- Ensure that you have additional, valuable reinforcers that are easily accessible.
- Ultimately the goal is for the behavior to maintain through the use of natural consequences, however, artificial rewards may be helpful initially while teaching and can often increase motivation while diminishing challenging behavior.
  - Helps to address cooperation, motivation, and attention
  - Direct reinforcement, generalized reinforcers (tokens)
Specific Examples: Learning to Take Care of Oneself

Using a task analysis and errorless teaching (prompting from behind is most helpful if physical guidance is used)

- Self Feeding
  - Adaptive products
  - Anticipate a mess!
  - First/Then is a tolerance issue

- Drinking from a cup
  - Begin with a very small cup
  - One sip criteria
  - Gradually increase

- Undressing/Dressing
  - Motivation (outside, dress up, etc.)
  - Start with clothing that is too big for ease

Using Visual Schedules with other prompts can often be Effective
Specific Examples: Helping Out: Toddlers (2-3)

Use of Lots of Physical Guidance & Imitation!

- Pick up/ put away toys
  - Use organizational systems (visual cues) to help child to sort
  - Pictures/photos to delineate each space
- Unload the dishwasher (silverware, plastic cups, Tupperware)
  - Have these types of items in a reachable area for children (child-safe items only)
  - Include in Identical and Non-Identical Matching Programs (DTT instruction)

Reward Child Heavily; Timers Can be Successful!

- Dust with a feather duster or microfiber rag
  - Bright color
- Swiffer the floor
  - Non-toxic only!
- Small broom/dust pan
  - Teach through imitation
- Put clothes in the dirty clothes hamper
  - Add a motivating “grabber toy”
Specific Examples: Helping Out: Toddlers (2-3)

Use receptive prompts (short, simple directives).

- Help transfer clothes from washer to dryer
- Sort some of the laundry
  - Matching socks
  - Sorting by family member
  - Generalized DTT matching program
- Help put clothes away
  - Picture labeled drawers
  - Small picture labels bins
  - Hanger visual cues

Mini visual schedules (task analyses) can be very effective!

- Make bed
- Wipe table, counter top (with foot stool), cabinets doors, baseboards (soapy water)
- Fill a pet's water and food bowls (with supervision)
- Help a parent clean up spills and dirt
**Specific Examples: Preschoolers (4-5)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lot of Supervision at First!</th>
<th>Use “green” products!</th>
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<tbody>
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The Role of the BHRS Clinician

- Ultimately, the long term goal is for the young child to demonstrate closer to age appropriate adaptive skills with parents and siblings.

- Via BHRS services, it is recommended that the BSC/MT develop an individualized, “family friendly” behavior intervention and provide parent consultation to teach the adaptive skill
  - TSS clinicians follow up by modeling for family and systematically transferring skills
  - Family should *almost* always be a part of behavioral shaping from the beginning
The Role of the BHRS Clinician

- Transfer of Skills to Family
  - Certain skills may be most effective taught and transferred in steps in with the BHRS clinical team targets skills first, and then generalizes

- Consultation Model of Guided Practice
  - Demonstration:
    - “I do” (clinician)
  - Guided Practice/Feedback:
    - “We do” (clinician and family member together)
  - Feedback/Problem Solving:
    - “You do” (family member) which immediate feedback from clinician
Helpful Hints & Products

*Remember that often an image can inspire the clinician or the family member to make a homemade version!
Some Recommended Books

[Images of book covers]

AUTISM: Teaching DOES Make a Difference

Self-Help Skills for People with Autism

Steps to Independence

From A to Z: Teaching Skills to Children with Autism

Autism Life Skills

Video Modeling for Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

The New Social Story Book
“A Work in Progress”

“Some days, doing ‘the best we can’ may still fall short of what we would like to be able to do, but life isn’t perfect-on any front- and doing what we can with what we have is the most we should expect of ourselves or anyone else.”

Quote from Fred Rogers
References

Resources

- http://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/community-connections/teaching-important-life-skills
- www.onestepahead.com
- http://www.asatonline.org/
- www.pinterest.com
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