



EARLY INTERVENTION ACTIVITIES IN THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND PARENT TRAINING

R. Margarita Gómez Citarella, MS, BCBA, LBA
Multicultural Clinical Center

Play – Engagement and Learning

- Interactive Play connects the brain and the body
- Play involves the use of all the senses
- Play promotes the acquisition of new skills – sensory, motor, social and academic.
- Play is crucial for teaching language, social and cognitive concepts.
- Play is a vehicle for engagement.
- Successful engagement is the first step for learning
- Pairing is defined by Engagement





Engagement Barriers in Play Activities: Absent, Weak or Impaired Skills

- Children in the spectrum barriers impact their ability to to initiate and engage in free play:
- Language (Mands, Tacts, L.R., IV., Echoics).
- Social Skills
- Scanning, Visual Perceptual Skills
- Motor Imitation
- Limited or Weak Motivators
- Joint Attention, eye contact
- Sensory Modulation (Overreactive, Under-reactive, Sensory Seeking).

Assume a Connection

- Do not decrease your engagement level if you do not receive the expected feedback from the child.. E.g. “does not smile back to you”, is not looking at you, etc.
- Interaction is reciprocal, so if you receive less, do not give less, do not pull back. E.g. Do not talk less, do not stop engaging.
- Negative responses or no responses from the child change our behavior because we are not obtaining a positive response from the child.
- Children with neurological difficulties need more input to store and access information.

Baby Steps-Motor Learning - Reinforcers

- Baby Steps – Break the activity in smaller parts and demonstrate one part of the activity exclusive of the other parts.
- Motor Learning – Physically guide the child through a new motor action several times before his or her body “gets it”, while verbally say what the child’s body is doing.
- Reinforcers – Some activities are internally motivating (naturally reinforced), while others require external reinforcers to motivate a child to attempt or engage in a novel activity. A reinforcer can be embedded in the game, a tangible or a sensory toy and linked to a social reinforcer.



Make it go FAST.



Go over the bridge.

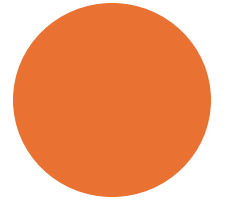


Visual Cues/Scripts

- Visual Cues – Children in the spectrum rely heavily on visual systems to understand the environment. They offer more permanent information than telling them what to do.

Infusing Language: Talk, Talk, Talk!!!

- The best way for a child to learn language is in the midst of an activity.
- Research shows that in early life more than 90% of verbs are learned while the action takes place.
- When children learn while engaging in the action, they are more likely to develop motor memory of the action linked to the verb. E.g. "Jump", "go", "wait", "run", "stop"!
- Spatial concepts are better understood when interacting with the words.



Benefits of Sensory Play

- Builds nerve connections in the brain's pathways, which leads to the ability to complete more difficult learning tasks.
- Supports language development and teaches sensory characteristics such as hot, cold, wet, sticky, dry, etc.
- Improves fine and gross motor skills by using the muscles of the hands, arms, trunk and legs.
- Help increase social interactions by completing activities with adults or children their age.
- Teaches problem solving and cause and effect skills.



Planning for Generalization



- The plan should include the following information:
- The skill that will be generalized – e.g. waiting, taking turns, my way, your way, etc.
- The settings in which the skill will be generalized.
- The people who will be involved in the generalization process.
- The materials that will be used.
- The strategies that will be used to promote generalization.
- The criteria for success.

What Parent Training in ABA Offers:

- Manage challenging behaviors effectively.
- Improve client's communication and social skills.
- Enhance the quality of life for the entire family.
- *Remember – Parents often respond to challenging behaviors exhibited by their children in such a way that unintentionally strengthens it.

How Do We teach ABA Strategies to Parents?



- Develop/Establish rapport with parents.
- Identify appropriate parent training goals.
- Present ideas/goals to the BCBA if additional or different goals are needed.
- Teach a skill to the parents didactically (without the client being there).



How Do We Teach ABA Strategies to Parents?

- Allow the parent to practice the skill either through role play with you and/or with the client.
- Provide feedback and answer questions without the client being present.
- Provide a written plan/goal to the parent if needed.

Task Analysis for client's Parents|

(Block & Redirect in combination with Attention Extinction)

When XXXX engages in any of the following behaviors:

- crying
- whining
- grabbing items
- throwing items
- aggression toward others and himself, such as hitting, scratching, pulling, etc.

THEN IMPLEMENT

Blocking and Redirecting with Attention Extinction

- 1) Stay calm (do not react to his behavior)
- 2) Ignore the behavior by doing the following:
 - Do not look at his face
 - Do not make any statements related to the behavior, such as "why are you crying?" or "what's wrong?"
 - Stay calm (no sighs)

Settings Where Parent Training can Occur:



- **DTT – Contrived Setting:**
- A contrived setting is one where the specific situation is created by the observer to gain relevant results.
- **NET – Natural Setting:**
- Data that is collected in the natural setting is more accurate in reflecting “real life behavior” rather than “contrived behavior”.



Develop your own parent training goal:

- Identify your client and the parent goal for generalization of the skill.
- Choose an activity that is developmentally appropriate for the client.
- Identify the learning barriers of the client.
- Identify the materials to be used.
- Identify the setting.
- The strategy to be implemented.
- The data collection method.



Bibliography

- Delaney, Tara, M.S., OTR, Ph.D. (2009), 101 Games and Activities for Children with Autism. Asperger's and Sensory Processing Disorders. McGraw- Hill, USA.
- Griffin, Simone et al, 40 Fun Picture Scripts to Develop Play and Communication Skills in Children on the Autism Spectrum. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London and Philadelphia.
- Sundberg L.(2009), VB-MAPP. Verbal Behavior Milestones Assessment and Placement Program. AVB-Press. USA.
- Other Internet Sources.