



General Therapies for Individuals with Autism

Speech and Language Pathology

Speech-language therapy entails the assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and helping to prevent speech, language, cognitive, communication, voice, swallowing, fluency, and other related disorders.

Speech-language pathologists work with people who cannot make speech sounds, or cannot make them clearly; those with speech rhythm and fluency problems, such as stuttering; people with voice quality problems, such as inappropriate pitch or harsh voice; those with problems understanding and producing language; those who wish to improve their communication skills by modifying an accent; and those with cognitive communication impairments, such as attention, memory, and problem solving disorders. They also work with people who have oral motor problems causing eating and swallowing difficulties (Courtesy of Explore Health Careers).

- *How can I tell if my child's speech and language development is on track?*
 - If your child is not on track with the following speech/language development milestones, you should talk to your pediatrician. To look for milestones in normal speech development, visit <http://www.med.umich.edu/yourchild/topics/speech.htm>

Resources:

Center for Speech and Language Disorders (CSLD)

www.csld.org

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities – Speech and Language Impairments

<http://nichcy.org/disability/specific/speechlanguage>

American Speech Language Hearing Association - FAQ: Speech and Language Disorders in the school setting

<http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/schoolsFAQ.htm>

National Association of Special Education Teachers: Speech and Language Impairments

<http://www.naset.org/speechandlanguage2.0.html>

Speech Buddy – Speech Solutions for Children at Home and with Speech Therapy

<http://www.speechbuddy.com/parents>

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is the application of behavior analysis that modifies human behaviors, especially as part of the learning and treatment process. Analysts focus on the

relationship of behavior to the environment. By assessing the relationship between a specific behavior and the environment, the methods of ABA can be used to change it.

The primary instructional method to ABA is called Discrete Trial Teaching (DTT). DTT involves breaking a skill into smaller parts, teaching one skill at a time until mastery, allowing repeated practice in a concentrated period of time, and using positive and negative reinforcement.

There is significant scientific evidence to show that applied behavior analysis can produce lasting improvements in many important skill areas for most people with autism, regardless of the age.

Resources:

Association for Science in Autism Treatment – Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

<http://www.asaonline.org/treatment/treatments/applied>

National Autism Resources – Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) – Helpful Products

<http://www.nationalautismresources.com/apbeanbein.html>

Special Needs Directory Connections Kids – DFW Therapeutic Resources

<http://www.specialneedskidsdirectory.com/therapeutic-resources-p1>

Autism NOW Center – Contemporary Applied Behavior Analysis Approaches

<http://autismnow.org/articles/contemporary-applied-behavior-analysis-approaches/>

Occupational Therapy (OT)

Occupational therapy (OT) is the use of treatments to develop, recover and maintain the daily living skills of patients with a physical, mental or developmental disorder. Interventions focus on adapting the environment, modifying the task, teaching the skill and educating the family/patient in order to increase participation in daily activities that would be important to the client.

Occupational therapy with children and youth may assist with:

- Promoting a wellness program in schools to prevent childhood obesity
- Facilitating hand writing development
- Promoting functional skills for living in children with developmental disabilities
- Providing individual treatment for sensory processing difficulties
- Addressing psychosocial needs of a child

Resources:

Therapy Street for Kids – Occupational Therapy

<http://therapystreetforkids.com>

PediaStaff Resources – Materials, Products and Tools – Occupational Therapy

<http://www.pediastaff.com/resources-materials-products--tools--occupational-therapy>

National Autism Resources – Occupational Therapy and Autism

<http://www.nationalautismresources.com/octh.html>

Hand to Hold – What does an occupational therapist do?

<http://handtohold.org/resources/meet-the-provider/what-does-an-occupational-therapist-do/>

Play Therapy/Floor time

Child psychiatrist, Stanley Greenspan, M.D, created floor time therapy. Its purpose is for adults to help their children expand their communication levels by building on their strengths. The technique challenges those with autism to push themselves to their fullest potential. Floor time builds on who the child is rather than their diagnosis.

Floor time sessions emphasize back-and-forth playing. This creates shared attention, engagement and problem solving. Parents and therapists help the child maintain focused thinking to abstract, logical thinking.

Floor time assists children in reaching the following milestones that are essential for emotional and intellectual growth:

- Self-regulation and interest in the world
- Intimacy, or engagement in human relations
- Two-way communication
- Complex communication
- Emotional ideas
- Emotional thinking

Resources:

Center for the Developing Mind - Floor Time: An Emotional Developmental Approach to Play Therapy for Children Impacted by Developmental and/or Affective Disorders

http://www.centerforthedevelopingmind.com/floor_time_emotional_approach

The Greenspan Floor time Approach – Questions about Floor time

<http://www.stanleygreenspan.com/about-floortime/questions-about-floortime/#1>

Floor time: A Play Intervention for Children with Autism – Dr. Ester Hess

http://drhessautism.com/img/news/apt_jan_2009.pdf

International Encyclopedia of Rehabilitation – Child-Centered Play Therapy

<http://cirrie.buffalo.edu/encyclopedia/en/article/275/>

Fumbling Thru Autism – Applying Floor time to Technology

<http://fumblingthruautism.wordpress.com/2012/11/19/applying-floortime-to-technology-how-my-child-with-autism-learned-to-use-the-ipad/>

Sensory Integration

Sensory-based therapies are used by occupational therapists and sometimes by other types of therapists in treatment of children with developmental and behavioral disorders. Researchers found that every 8 out of ten children with autism have problems processing sensory input. Standard therapy usually focuses on the following areas: tactile (sense of touch), vestibular (sense of movement), and proprioceptive (sense of body position). Brushes, swings, balls, and other specially designed therapeutic or recreational equipment are used to provide this assistance.

Results of sensory integration therapy can include:

- Positive outcomes in sensorimotor skills and motor planning
- Socialization

- Attention
- Behavior regulation
- Reading related skills
- Participation in active play
- Achievement of individualized goals
- Improvements in gross motor skills and self esteem

Resources:

My Child at CerebralPalsy.org – Sensory Integration Therapy and Cerebral Palsy

<http://cerebralpalsy.org/about-cerebral-palsy/therapies/sensory-integration-therapy/>

The American Occupational Therapy Association – Addressing Sensory Integration Across the Lifespan Through Occupational Therapy

http://www.aota.org/~media/Corporate/Files/AboutOT/Professionals/WhatsOT/HW/Facts/FactSheet_SensoryIntegration.ashx

Sensory Integration UK

<http://www.sensoryintegration.co.uk>

Autism Research Institute – Sensory Integration Therapy

http://www.autism.com/index.php/symptoms_sensory_king

Healing Thresholds – Factsheet for Autism Therapy: Sensory Integration

<http://autism.healingthresholds.com/therapy/sensory-integration>

Social Skills Therapy

The purpose of social skills therapy is to teach people who may or may not have emotional problems about the verbal and nonverbal behaviors involved in social interactions. “Small talk” in social settings does not come easily for people who need social skills therapy. In social skills therapy, they will learn the importance of good eye contact and how to read subtle social cues such as how to tell when someone wants to change the topic of conversation.

The goal of the Social Skills Group Therapy Program is to assist children in developing friendship skills by teaching strategies for:

- Active listening
- Conversational skills
- Responding appropriately to social cues
- Identifying personal feelings and understanding the emotions of others
- Problem solving for conflict situations
- Compromising, sharing, being a good sport
- Negative thoughts and management of feelings
- Anger and frustration management
- Teasing and bullying

Follow the these steps:

1. Define one or more social behavior that the child needs for improvement.
2. Use a trial-teaching method while discussing with and teaching the child new social behaviors.
3. Create real life scenarios while applying these social skills.

4. Transition from a structured teaching situation to everyday life situations.
5. Check for social validity.

Resources:

Southwest Autism Research and Resource Center - Social Skills Intervention Strategies for Children with Autism

<http://www.cigna.com/assets/docs/behavioral-health-series/autism/2012/socialSkills.pdf>

Autism Speaks – Interactive Autism Network Research Findings: Social Skills Groups

<http://www.autismspeaks.org/news/news-item/ian-research-findings-social-skills-groups>

University of California Television – Social Skills Training in High Functioning Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders (VIDEO)

<http://www.uctv.tv/shows/Social-Skills-Training-in-High-Functioning-Adolescents-with-Autism-Spectrum-Disorders-Important-Issues-and-Future-Directions-20285>

Glenwood.org – A List of Apps for Social Skills and Autism Spectrum Disorders

<http://glenwood.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Social-Skills-and-Autism-Spectrum-Disorders-Application-List.pdf>

AutismToday.com - Top 10 Autism Strategies for Encouraging Better Social Skills

<http://www.autismtoday.com/top-10-autism-strategies-for-encouraging-better-social-skills/>