

autism

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By Tinkoo Puri, 21 year old trainee at Aadhaar (Work Skill training centre), Action for Autism, New Delhi

WISHLIST !

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PAGE ONE

Sunnu ate his meals off a ceramic plate. He was a mostly unfussy eater if he got his dry roti and dahi. During tea time he ate cake, cookies and other favoured items off a mauve plastic plate. One Sunday his aunt came to visit. Helping Sunnu's mother in the kitchen she offered to lay out Sunnu's lunch. She took his favoured roti and dahi in his mauve plate and laid it out for Sunnu to eat. Sunnu had a major tantrum. Flustered the aunt tried to figure out what she might have said or done that could have triggered the tantrum. But Sunnu's mother coming into the dining room knew instantly what the problem was. Sunnu's mauve plastic plate communicated to him that he would get some cookies and cake to eat. Instead he was given roti and dahi. Sunnu felt confused and cheated and did the only thing he could to express his confusion: he threw a tantrum.

I began to truly appreciate the complexity of human communication only after I was gifted with a son with autism. It was actually several years after he received his diagnosis that this perception began to dawn on me. Till then communication for me was this effortless way of connecting with people. Something that came as naturally as breathing. It did not matter whether you could use speech or not. Communication was as easy as the water that flowed out of our taps.

For a long time after the diagnosis I thought Neeraj's 'lack' of communication had to do with his lack of speech. I believed that my son had only to speak for things to get sorted out. How deluded I was. How complex is communication. And how difficult to convey to those with an 'outsiders' perspective on autism the baffling ways that communication can be impaired in an individual with autism.

Families want their children to talk. "If only he can start speaking he will be alright". So they make a lot of effort showing an object or a picture of an object and trying to make their child repeat the label for the object. But since vocalizing alone is no guarantee that the child will communicate the child often ends up with a lot of labels but still no communication.

Most children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) learn differently from other children. Therefore teaching

strategies that are effective with other children often do not work with children with ASD.

We tend to believe that the primary mode of communication should be the spoken word, because that is what we are used to. But many people with autism who do not speak, communicate eloquently through the printed word, writing by hand or on the computer. We are increasingly realizing the importance of alternative and augmentative communication in enabling persons with autism towards independence. Persons with autism have difficulties with the abstract and the transient. Communication must therefore be adapted to the individualized level of abstraction using signs, gestures, picture-cards, photo-cards, word-cards, and objects, in addition to spoken words.

In this issue, Theo Peeters introduces us to the language of objects, to an understanding that objects serve a communicative function for persons with autism. Peeters is a gifted professional. The sensitivity of his understanding of autism, coloured by the viewpoints of the individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders he has known and whose development he has followed from childhood into adulthood, permeates his writing. It is an understanding that escapes many of us who have followed a either a limited spectrum, or over a limited period of time, or in limited numbers.

(cont on page 4...)

ANNOUNCEMENT!

Workshop on Relationship Development Intervention

The Developmental Program for Social
and Emotional Growth developed
by Steven E Gutstein
that has stirred up enormous interest
and excitement...

For information See Page 16...

The Language of Objects

Theo Peeters

It was 30 years ago and one of my first experiences with a child with autism. Donald had a severe developmental delay as well as autism. I had prepared such a 'beautiful activity' with his bag. After the first minute of this beautiful activity he developed a temper tantrum. I, of course, feared he did not like me... Why not?

I found out that he associated this bag with going home. When I gave him his bag he thought I was telling him: 'It is time to go home.' After one minute he found out that I had been lying to him, because he had to stay for my beautiful exercise.

I learned a lot from this stupid mistake. I learned that objects can speak and it seems to me now that this is a good first lesson for anyone involved in communication processes in autism.

RECENTLY, during a practical training session, I saw one of the participants make a similar mistake. At the end of the day's program she helped Ronaldo to put on his shoes. Ten minutes later Ronaldo was still in the free time area not knowing what had happened to him: this adult had 'told' him to go home and here he still was waiting. He started to hit himself very hard. The participant was left wondering why Ronaldo had this challenging behaviour. One of the very important aspects professionals have to learn is that objects may have a communication value for persons with autism.

ONE of the other aspects to learn is that there are many different languages in the use of objects, just as in the use of words. For the three-dimensional object we drink from we have the word glass; we have the word *verre*, *bicchiere*, *pohar*, *vaso*, *becher*, *potere* and so on. But glasses may have different forms, colours, textures, smells, and for a person with autism without an internal concept of 'glass' they may represent a world of differences.

JUDY had learned to associate a plate with eating. She seemed so proud and happy about this understanding, her first entering into the world of meaning. And then one day when given a plate and sitting at the table she started screaming very loudly: another behaviour

problem. In Judy's hyperselective thinking the texture was very important in trying to make sense out of the world. She had learned to recognise how pleasant and meaningful it was to touch a wooden plate, especially if it was followed immediately by something to eat. Yet that special day one unthinking professional had given her a plastic plate as a symbol for time to eat. In almost the only thing Judy really understood of meaning in life she felt terribly cheated and reacted violently.

IN training professionals one of the first things to learn is that behaviour problems may be expressions of stress, may in fact be 'pre-communicative' behaviours, desperate attempts at trying to say something for which one still does not have words or other symbols. Our reaction should always be: what is he trying to say through his behaviour? Is not his reaction related to his 'autism thinking'? What has he understood differently? Is it then possible for us to communicate our expectations in an alternative way, at an individualised symbolic level, through written words, or through pictures, or through objects (or through details of objects)?

Symbols of a 'lower' or 'higher' value

There is something strange about the use of objects as a mode of communication, or should I say: there is something strange about our minds. Very often I have found that professionals who want to help non-verbal persons with autism almost automatically think of the use of pictures, as if objects were too low in value. I believe that one of the prices that students with autism have to pay for 'normalisation' is that we all too often aim at the highest possible symbolic level of abstraction for communication and education, not necessarily at the highest level of independence for the students themselves. All too often this seems to be associated with the never explicitly formulated opinion that after all the way in which we (the 'normal') tend to think is the best way, if not the only way, of thinking.

IT is important to realise that we also use objects more than we think for communication. I show a watch (it is time to go), I show a glass (let's have a drink), I show the car keys (we have to leave), etc. And the need to

have communication at an object level becomes more urgent and necessary when we are stranded in another culture without an orientation manual - which is how Jim Sinclair (1992) describes the experience of having autism.

YOU are in Flanders and I communicate to you in four different symbolic levels. Which communication level would be easiest for you?

- Spoken message: not printed here, since verbal words are invisible and fugitive.
- Spoken message together with the written message: “*Wilt ge met me mee komen eten?*”
- Spoken message together with the picture of a plate.
- Spoken message together with the real plate.

EVERYONE will tell me that the communication with an object was the easiest one to understand. Yet by a lack of true comprehension we risk not allowing students with autism, with severe communication problems, to have access to very concrete messages at an object level.

Access to the world of symbols equals access to a typically human world

The more we try to imagine how it would be to live with a combination of autism and a profound developmental delay, the more we feel our limits. Philosophers have said that entering the world of meaning is the door to human development. Is it possible that some of our citizens still live in a world without meaning, where a perception is a perception and nothing else beyond the literal information? Living in such a world may mean that everything seems dominated by coincidence, where one is the victim of things happening without any possibility of anticipation. Such a life would be one without real power over the environment and therefore a resultant dependency on others to structure, guide and protect.

CLEARLY such citizens (and my suggestion is that some citizens with autism find themselves in this position), would need our sense of responsibility and care more than anyone else. And it should be clear right from the beginning that we need to adapt our teaching of meaning to their brain functioning, instead of expecting them to adapt to our level of meaning. The strong should adapt to the weaker, not the other way round.

IT is well known that we have a left and a right hemisphere and that each half of the brain is specialised

in dealing with certain skills, the left specialised in speech production for instance, the right dealing with space. It is a little bit less known that each hemisphere also has its specialised way of dealing with information. The right brain is specialised in perceptual synthesis; the left brain is specialised in conceptual analysis.

Gazzaniga (1970) gives a nice and simple example. Here you have an apple and an orange. For the right brain they are alike because both are round. One does not have to go beyond the perception, you see immediately that they are round. The roundness of an apple and an orange does not have to be analysed; it is information speaking for itself. For the left brain an apple and an orange are alike because both of them are fruit. The ‘fruit-ness’ of an apple and an orange does not speak for itself; it has to be analysed according to meaning. This conceptual information is rather open. Here one has to go beyond the literal perceptual information. Understanding the meaning of speech and of social interaction is essentially the result of the left brain analysis.

NOW it seems that persons with autism may treat much communicative and social information with right brain strategies, much longer than one would expect for their developmental ages. Abstracting meaning from social and communicative processes is much more difficult than we suppose and especially in these areas persons with autism seem to be more dominated by their perception than by their analysis of meaning. Therefore we see echo-effects (the literal processing of information) much longer than one would expect for their general developmental level (Happe 1995; Jordan 1996; Peeters 1997). This has far reaching effects for communication and education.

MY experience shows that the capacity to abstract meaning (out of our communication and our social interactions) in individuals with autism is less developed than their general developmental level suggests. Two examples will serve to illustrate this notion:

1. I know a six-year-old boy with autism. His name is Tom. He has a general developmental age of two and yet he does not abstract meaning from speech. He cannot analyse the meaning from a drawing. He does not understand what his mother means when she shows him his shoes.
2. I know Kitty, she is an adult with autism with a general developmental age of two and a half. She understands no pictures. When I first met her she did not understand that she was going to eat when the carer

showed her a spoon. Instead of understanding the meaning of objects, she strictly associated them with a certain context. Spoons, forks and plates had to stay in the kitchen. When she found a spoon left somewhere in the grass she started crying: the little she understood of the world was turned upside down. Every object seen in a different context could turn into a nightmare for her.

TOM and Kitty do not understand pictures or the meaning of objects beyond their functional value. They will have to learn to understand symbols and then later use them expressively for communication. If we are not conscious of the fact that the capacity of abstraction may be lower than the general developmental age suggests, then we might propose an education at the level of the general developmental age for them. This education may well respond to our expectations and dreams, but much less to the real level of understanding of Tom and Kitty. I will try to formulate the conclusion of this section a

little bit differently. Persons with autism are relatively strong in processing information that is: concrete, visible, and in space. Whereas persons with autism are relatively weak in processing information that is: abstract, invisible and in time (i.e. transient, fugitive, temporal). In our traditional (special) education we are used to passing on information in an abstract, invisible, temporal mode (our brains are very good at this). Instead of saying that Tom and Kitty are weak in abstract, invisible and temporal information and that they have to learn to function like us, we will say that Tom and Kitty have strengths that we will use.

So we will try to develop, a different perspective (a revolutionary one perhaps) on the education for persons with autism and turn our abstract, invisible, temporal messages into concrete, visible and spatial ones. This is the real meaning of integration: where the stronger adapts to the weaker. *(To be continued)*

Diploma in Special Education (Autistic Spectrum Disorder)

Training Course 2006-2007

Action for Autism, a premier organization training therapists and teachers to work with individuals with autism and communication handicaps, offers training in one of the most challenging and exciting areas of Special Education. AFA has pioneered teaching strategies based on extensive practical experience and internationally used sound behavioural principles, adapted to the Indian condition. Successful candidates receive placements in leading organizations. Admissions open for our RCI recognised course in Autism starting July 2006. Limited seats.

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**Action For Autism
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(...cont from page one)

Anjali Joshi needs no introduction to many, and least to those working with individuals on the spectrum. Her understanding of their sensory needs is phenomenal and continues to benefit families and professionals who work with them. Dr Joshi gives us an insight into the way sensory integration impacts on play skills.

In February, Jason McElwain caught media attention in the USA with his remarkable performance on the basketball court. We share his story along with a mother's reflections on her daughter's foray on the basketball court. While Jason's achievement is no doubt important in bringing the spotlight on autism, I believe Divya's is more special, highlighting all the Divyas who notch up achievements everyday, achievements which require phenomenal effort on their part.

As Chitra says: "Kids with autism are noticed only if they do something extraordinary. Their more modest triumphs...remain unacknowledged by people who do not know what it takes".

It is the everyday that marks our lives. Everyday that we live with our children, everyday that we learn to grieve a little less and enjoy them a little more, everyday that we teach them, play with them, share their lives and together craft the small steps they take everyday. Let us remember to celebrate the everyday achievements as well.

Play and Sensory Integration: Two Sides of the Same Coin

Dr Anjali Joshi

Play is an integral part of growing up and in the last forty years extensive research has been done by educationists, child psychologists, psychiatrists and occupational therapists in what can be called as 'occupation of children'.

TODAY, in this era of television and other electronic entertainment, professionals dealing with children debate over implications of no play. Serious thought needs to be given to why play is so important and how it affects over all growth and development of a child including his academic achievement.

ONE of the definitions of play is 'Play is the eager engagement in a pleasurable physical or mental effort to obtain emotional satisfaction' (Sheridan). Play in any form helps our brain learn, grow and mature. If we want our child, normal or special, to work towards his academic and social skills then we as parents need to present all the challenges in the form of play.

A few of very simple and yet very vital types of play which should form part of growing up are symbolic play, playing in the play ground and of course quite sit down tasks such as reading, colouring, singing etc. done with your child.

THE beauty of symbolic play is that the parents don't need to buy expensive toys for the child. Battery operated toys may tempt you and your child but they provide very little scope for imagination and creativity and hence are not therapeutic and educational for you child.

WHAT is required is:

1. provision of specific play space (an old TV or computer carton is just fine)
2. time (that means the child should be free from hobby classes and tuition classes).
3. Objects, which help the child, make a transition to representational play (some wooden blocks, colorful plastic straws, some play dough, bottle caps or even movable light furniture). And most important
4. an encouragement and support from the adults i.e. mummy or/ and daddy giving some spare time to become a 'guest' in their child's tea party.

Nothing of course can substitute child's playtime in the garden or a physical activity, which the child enjoys alone or with his friends.

THERE is no fixed schedule for introducing books to a child. A quiet sit down time spent with the child where parent indulge in story telling or singing nursery rhymes can go a long way in developing your child's imagination, attention and bonding with the parents.

EARLY on, as the child starts playing, he may play alone (solitary play) or actually play with other children (cooperative play). As parents, it is crucial that we give him/her an opportunity and encouragement to do that.

PLAY helps in developing child's holistic development. Today in urban India, nuclear families are a rule; houses are virtually centered round the child. This hampers the child's social skill development in terms of sharing, relating and adjusting with another individual. All these skills form the basis of emotional quotient of tomorrow's adult. Make believe play (playing Doctor, engine driver etc.) and games with rules (snake and ladder, cards) therefore must form the integral part of every child's childhood.

HANDWRITING and other fine motor activities such as learning to button ones own shirt, eating with a spoon form an important element of child's development. For developing these skills what can be better than giving the child opportunity to play games such as stringing beads, finger painting, and coloring, playing in sand, pumping on a swing and trying different stunts on a jungle-gym? All these games which develop mind- body relation improve the child's fine motor skills and help in developing child's attention and concentration.

THUS 'Play', no matter of what kind, is a major building factor in the development of gross motor, fine motor skills, visual perception, social skills, and level of competency and self-esteem of the child...

Sensory integration and play

We explore or learn about the world around us through sensory experiences. These sensory experiences include touch, movement, body awareness or joint sense, sight,

sound. *'The process of the brain organizing and interpreting this information is called as sensory integration'* (Dr. A Jean Ayres).

SENSORY integration (S.I.) is a theory conceived and developed by Dr. A Jean Ayres, an occupational therapist from U.S.A. she developed it after her extensive research with animals and with children having learning problems. In the last fifty years, a lot of research has been added to her study to see effect of sensory integrative therapy on children with special needs such as attention deficit and autism. This theory helps explain relationship between brain and behaviour and how a certain change can be brought about in both.

FOR most children sensory integration occurs as a part of natural growing process. This process might be slow or fast in some children. None of us organize sensations perfectly. Some people have good sensory integration, others just average, and still others poor. Smooth refined movements, language, emotional maturity, social interaction and mastery of academic tasks/skills are the natural outcome of sensory integration. Children, even very young, must be able to take in information from all channels and perform many skills automatically.

SENSORY integrative therapy is to be administered by a professional (therapist) who is trained in this technique. To a lay person it may look like play but it has a strong scientific basis and is different from a situation where child is playing in the garden, with or without supervision. The purpose of the therapy is not to teach the child an activity or a game but try to make him more capable of learning.

What is S.I. dysfunction?

At present, there is no way to measure the disorders in the brain as it occurs. A sensory integrative disorder is not like a medical problem and it cannot be isolated so easily. Only a trained occupational therapist can see the subtly different behavior that is based on good sensory integration and that which is based on poor integration. There is nothing like normal sensory integration and some times even a normal healthy child may show some of these symptoms. Only if they are collectively and frequently seen in a child then they would require therapeutic intervention.

How do sensory integration dysfunctions affect play?

For infants, toddlers or adolescents, play continues to be a tool for experiencing sensations. And this in turn

works towards maturation of the nervous system and the brain. So in children who have a problem processing sensory information, either coming from the outside world or from within would show disruption in play. For example, touch is a primitive mode of exploration and so one of the crucial elements of play. A child who has a problem in processing touch will not be comfortable playing with finger paints, sand, crayons or is likely to show unusual handling and mouthing of toys.

SOUND too is an integral part of play especially in toddlers and young children. Musical instruments, electronic toys, squeaky toys all have a sound element. Children who have a problem tolerating sounds (auditory defensiveness) are likely to shirk away from all these toys including group activities such as playing in the garden and birthday parties.

ONE more component of play which we all take in for granted in every day activity, is movement. One can not imagine play or even any interaction with our environment without movement. Child with problems in sensory integration dysfunction sometimes shows fear of movement (gravitational insecurity). These children will show distress or anxiety in any situation which demands shift in head position, or where feet are off the ground such as swing, jungle gym or rough play at home. Such a child is bound to show problems in any form of interactive or exploratory play thus hampering the child's motor growth and development.

PLAY behavior of children with autism have certain peculiar features. Stereotypical activities, lack of symbolic qualities and limited flexibility limit an autistic child's planning and execution of a complex play. Such a child would find it difficult to take part in creative or make believe play.

IN early age imitation is used by the child as the language of friendship so difficulty in learning to imitate reflects in the autistic child's inability to make friends or develop group interaction.

CHILDREN with autism may find it difficult either to visually remember motor actions or would to transfer information from a visual stimulus to the motor system.

HOW can one use play as an intervention tool?

To help autistic child function optimally in his environment, useful strategy is to expand his play abilities. Through play a lot of useful strategies can be

taught to the child. One can improve child's attention, intimacy, promote two way communications, encourage expression, develop social relations and ideas and develop logical thoughts.

Strategies to enhance play

Safe sensory environment is the key here. Observe the behavior to see if there is any indication of communication, observe and respond appropriately, stay in safe physical proximity of the child, encourage eye contact, be playful and animated, get involved in word, motivate him to interact, set up an attractive environment, respond to his communication, sing, use music, provide assistance, opportunity for turn taking (games such as snake and ladder), imitate the child and give him opportunities to imitate you. Playfully block repetitive play to create new play. For example, if the child likes to line up toy cars then create an obstacle course with pillows, furniture or by standing in his path so the child is forced to make eye contact *and* solve the problem, simultaneously. Provide appropriate novelty and provide familiar play themes. Plan activities that could provide sensory rich environment. One could do that by adding tactile, proprioceptive and vestibular activities.

Role of family in child's play

A family, having a child who is differently able is a family first. The parents have all the responsibilities and duties towards this child as the other parents, but they have some added responsibilities too! Using play as a modality would help the parents reduce the stress of dealing with their additional burden. Recreation and play would not only act as a buffer to deal with this stress but also help in improving this child's social cognitive skills through modeling, imitation or copying others.

Some games and activities which you as parents can incorporate in your daily interaction with the child are:

- Movement activities are very important for a developing child. Be sure to make time for activities like swinging, sliding, riding or merry-go round.
- Pull/ push activities, jumping and activities involving weight and deep pressure or firm touch help activate the proprioceptive system.
- One can use resistive activities in daily routine such as picking up a stack of pillows, moving chairs or playing tug of war to stimulate this system.
- Hanging and swinging on the door bar.
- Throwing or hitting a ball against the wall.
- Jumping on a trampoline.
- Jigsaw puzzles: choose them depending on the child's

level

- Wooden block/plastic blocks designs.
- Geometric shape designs.
- Patterned bead stringing.
- Chalk board games.
- Cutting pictures, coloring with thick crayons or chalks.
- Use play dough to form shapes and alphabets.
- Maze books or activity books.

To summarize, indulging in activities which help you and your child have a great time are the ones which help towards over all development of your child. So dear parents go ahead and have a blast with your child and rest assures you will see wonderful results at the end of it.

to my son

Rukhsana Khan

Were you an eagle?
Born on a silver crag
Searching for water in roaring springs
And finding it in a bird basin?

Were you a Labrador puppy?
The smallest of the litter
Searching blindly for a teat
And finding it in my breast?

Were you a stray spirit?
Wafting through the eons
Stopping to take a breath
And suddenly imprisoned in a human body?

Who are you?
Where did you want to go?
You are now safe in my arms
But what worlds have you found – and lost?

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Basketball Stars

Jason's story...

Jason McElwain is the 17-year-old senior manager of his high school basketball team. As an all-around motivator for his team he exhorts and amuses his teammates: singing in rap verse,

*"You've gotta give it everything you got!
The winner goes home all happy
The loser goes home and says
Mommy we lost the game, wah wah wah!"*
and handing out water bottles to his team, dispensing tips, helping run drills.

MCELWAIN, who is autistic, drew national attention, and a flood of calls from Hollywood after he delivered a jaw-dropping performance. His parents have received inquiries from about 25 production companies ranging from The Walt Disney Co and Warner Bros to independent documentary filmmakers.

CONSIDERED too small to make the team as a player, McElwain signed on as manager so as to be near the sport he loves. Amazed at his dedication, coach Jim Johnson had him suit up for his team's final home game of the season though there was no guarantee he would play. Elwain entered the game with four minutes to go. It was his first and only appearance for the Athena varsity team in this Rochester NY suburb. The 5-foot-6 teenager hit six three-point shots and a 2-pointer and was carried off the court on his teammates' shoulders.

HIS triumph was captured on a student video: (video link): <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-818944862742874918&q=autistic>) that made the rounds of the television networks. The school was besieged with calls and e-mails from parents of children who have autism.

MCELWAIN didn't begin talking until he was five and still lacks social skills but has learned to cope well in his teens. "He might talk a little loud, laugh a little too long or not be able to read the body language or even the tone of voice of a person, but it's not a big difficulty,"

Kids with autism are noticed only if they do something extraordinary. Their more modest triumphs – modest perhaps by mainstream standards, but phenomenal by theirs – often remain unacknowledged by people who do not know what it takes.

said his special-education teacher, Diane Maddock. Maddock adds that when told about it Jason acknowledges, "OK, you're right, I shouldn't have said that or laughed when I laughed." Jason also prides himself on having a lot of friends.

"WE have an obligation as a society to find a way to include people with different abilities," says the school's athletic director, Randolph Hutto, whose 12-year-old son, Joshua, is autistic. "This, hopefully, will help open doors for some people, or open some eyes."

...and Divya's

A few days ago, cyberwaves in the autism world were lighting up faster than a magnesium wire with the story of one Rochester, NY student's spectacular achievement. Jason McElwain, a high school student with autism was pulled in to play for his team with four minutes left to go. He had never played before, only assisted his coach with the team and participated in building up morale.

IN those four minutes, he scored an amazing 20 points.

KIDS with autism are noticed only if they do something extraordinary. Their more modest triumphs – modest perhaps by mainstream standards, but phenomenal by theirs – often remain unacknowledged by people who do not know what it takes. This is only natural.

AS the parent of a 15-year-old girl with autism, I am privileged to have an insider perspective. I could see that Jason's admirable talent and dedication were only part of the story. It was just as uplifting to experience the roars of support from his classmates who, after the final buzzer sounded, poured out towards him like a storm surge. It was positively electrifying to sense the belief, love and insight required of that coach – to give Jason a chance to perform under pressure.

I'LL tell you why this story was particularly well-timed for me. A couple of weeks ago, I registered Divya in a basketball camp organized by a nonprofit called Jack's Place for Autism, which operates out of Oakland County

in Michigan. The sessions are held on the campus of Oakland University, which is a long, long drive from where we live in evening rush hour. But I thought if she had a good time, it would be worth it.

WELL, the introductory session was on Friday, 3 March. We arrived and found it was pretty well attended – some 21 enrollees of all ages and abilities. One kid with Aspergers Syndrome, which is the higher functioning, verbal end of the Autism Spectrum, came straight up to us and started a conversation. He proved why verbal ability could be just as much if not more of a social handicap! The conversation went something like this:

He: Does she have autism?

Me: Yes. (Divya was right by my side)

He: Can she talk ?

Me: Yes, a little.

He: Is she in regular ed or a special ed classroom?

Me: Why are you asking?

AS you can see, ‘tact’ is not this kid’s strong suit! He didn’t mean to be insensitive – he was just asking questions as they struck him. At this point, Coach Bill interrupted us to get started – and I found myself thinking – Isn’t it interesting how even kids with limited or unusual information processing pick up on the implicit caste system **within** the world of disabilities! The more verbal of them are taught to feel better than less verbal children, or segregated children! Such is human nature.

AS soon as Divya came into the gym, she was handed a basketball, and she proceeded to score three baskets shooting from the line. But when Coach Bill began talking about rules and expectations, she was not sure she wanted to go along. After all, she had been expecting to have the run of the court and have as many tries as she wished – now she was being given instructions on warm-up exercises and rules when she just wanted to get on with doing things her way. It sounded too much like hard work! So she said “enough basketball” and went and sat down by the wall with her ball.

I went to her and said “Divya, I know you can do this. I want you to show them what you can do. You’ve already scored even before your lesson. So get there and try!”

I stood in the circle right behind her. it would have been impossible for her to follow what the Coach was saying otherwise, because it was hard even for me at times to hear above the echoing pandemonium of children

bouncing basketballs and running around in that indoor court. I repeated what he said to her if she didn’t immediately pick up on it.

THEY did some warm-up exercises at first.

DIVYA then had to transfer the ball from one hand to another behind her back. She had to do what the coach called ‘fingertips,’ which is to pass the ball from one hand to another using just her fingertips. She had to attempt proper dribbling technique with her elbow close to her body.

THEN she had to participate in a manoeuvre where when the coach calls out “SWITCH” she had to put her ball down and grab someone else’s ball. She put the ball down all right, but it was hard for her to take someone else’s basketball. It was the same thing with the ‘grab’ move – when I told her to grab the ball, she would meekly hand it over or tentatively reach for it. As far as aggression goes, she definitely does not take after either of her parents! So I had to demonstrate to her what grabbing meant!

BUT she did in fact cooperate and do exactly as she was told as well as she could do it. And I could see she felt like a million watts.

LATER, they were divided into teams. A team was lined up against one wall – they had to dribble their ball to the other end and make it safely without giving it up to anyone. Coach Bill pointed to the other volunteers and said “You are the mice, and we are the CATS! What do cats do? They pounce on the mice, and the mice have to run away and stay safe!”

UH -OH, I thought to myself, DEFINITELY not a good idea with Divya, given her intense fear of being chased! So I went up to one of the volunteers and said they would have to go easy on Divya because of her fear. I wasn’t even sure if Divya would run to the other end in the middle of so many kids – but she DID, not once, but several times! And she netted a total of seven baskets that evening!

MY hope is that just as playing the piano gave her a way to overcome her exclusive use of one finger for typing and a host of other tasks, that these basketball sessions with a friendly and encouraging crew will take the edge of her fear of being pursued –which is the basis of her current terror of dogs.

SHE was completely unafraid of dogs until about age four. Evidently some personal experience or something she saw on TV intensified and cemented this fear. It's at the point now where she gets into a screaming fit – even if the dog in the vicinity is on a leash, irrespective of its size.

I believe deep down she still likes dogs because of how she responds to stuffed doggie toys. I just haven't found the appropriate agency, person or environment to begin helping her to confront and overcome this fear. I believe her fear has to be overcome by degrees, with patience.

THE fact that I adore dogs and find them non-threatening doesn't make her reactions any less valid to her. For that matter, I wouldn't readily jump into a snake-pit just because I observe someone letting them writhe all over him!

ANYHOW, I digress. It was just beautiful to watch the joy on Divya's face as she bounded from one end of the court to another – to see her wait patiently in line for her turn (even if she did try to cram in more than one shot when she got to the line!) – and glow with delight when the volunteers and Coach Bill gave her high-fives.

WE will be driving 1.5 hours each way to this camp every Friday for the next seven weeks. I am looking forward to learning from the experience just as much as Divya is!

LETTERS

We have been to AFA in the first week of March. It has been an exciting and enriching visit. Thanks to all the staff: Indu, Viveka, Priyam, Sweta, Jayati and Saumya for their kind support. It was nice to become a life member of AFA. We are continuing with the programme and trying to follow the tips given by the therapists. Thanks to all of you.

S Singh
BHOPAL

The Best Picture Award went to the film 'Black'. This was very disappointing. 'Black' is a good film but bad for the picturisation of special education. Your editorial on Page One of Autism Network April 2005 should have been published in the newspapers.

You should send a copy to Amitabh Bachhan so he understands disability.

P Date
NAGPUR

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व्यवहार परिवर्तन (भाग – 3)

इन्दु चसवाल

माता-पिता और शिक्षकों को अक्सर यह शिकायत रहती है कि उनका ऑटिस्टिक बच्चा बहुत जिद्दी है और अपनी बात मनवाने के लिए हट करता है।

उदाहरण –

- 1) घर में टी वी बन्द होने पर सर पटकना, जब तक पुनः टी वी चलाया जाये।
- 2) बाजार में चिप्स या चॉकलेट की दुकान के सामने रोना या चिल्लाना।
- 3) स्कूल में कार्य देने पर रोना या चिल्लाना।

इन व्यवहारों का यदि मूल्यांकन करें तो, हमें यह समझ पड़ेगा कि इनके फलस्वरूप बच्चे की बात मान ली जाती है। इस कारण इनकी पुष्टि या सम्बलन मिलता है।

सवाल यह है कि यदि हमने स्वयं ऐसे अनुचित व्यवहारों को बढ़ावा दिया है, तो अब बच्चे को इनसे कैसे मुक्त करें? सामाजिक रूप से पूर्व पुष्ट व्यवहारों को हम "विलोपन" द्वारा दूर कर सकते हैं।

विलोपन (extinction)

विलोपन व्यवहार परिवर्तन का एक नियम है। इसका अर्थ है :-

पहले सम्बलित व्यवहार को और सम्बलन देना बिल्कुल रोक देना।

उदाहरण :- यदि रोने पर आप बच्चे को चॉकलेट खरीद देते थे, तो अब और आगे भविष्य में भी "रोने" पर बिल्कुल ध्यान न देना और रोने पर चॉकलेट न प्राप्त होना। इस प्रकार से चॉकलेट के लिए "रोने" के व्यवहार को विलोपन नियम द्वारा रोका जा सकता है।

परन्तु यह इतना सरल नहीं है। यह देखा गया है कि अतीत में बच्चे को जिस व्यवहार द्वारा मनपसंद वस्तु मिलती थी या अपनी बात मनवाता था, अब अचानक उसी व्यवहार का उसे इच्छानुसार परिणाम नहीं मिलता। इसलिए वह और ज्यादा कोशिश करेगा। अर्थात् व्यवहार और ज्यादा बढ़ने लगेगा। परन्तु यदि उसके व्यवहार पर ध्यान न दिया जाय और नियमित रूप से विलोपन किया जाय, प्रत्येक व्यक्ति द्वारा ऐसा किया जाय तो कुछ समय बाद बच्चा सीख जाता है कि इस विशेष व्यवहार से कुछ नहीं होगा।

हम यह नहीं कर रहे कि बच्चे को मनपसन्द वस्तु या क्रिया से दूर किया जाये। यह बहुत निर्णायक है कि एक अनुचित व्यवहार की उपेक्षा या अवज्ञा (इग्नोर) करने के साथ साथ उसी व्यवहार के उद्देश्य के लिए एक उचित व्यवहार सिखाया जाय।

उदाहरण :- जोहरा एक चार वर्षीय ऑटिस्टिक बच्ची है। जब भी उसे कहीं पर भी पेप्सी नजर आती है (घर, दुकान, सामाजिक उत्सव इत्यादि) वह रोना शुरू करती है। यदि उसे पेप्सी नहीं दी जाती है तो वह रोना, चिल्लाना, जमीन पर लोटना शुरू करती है। परेशान होकर उसके माता पिता उसे पेप्सी दिला देते हैं। उस समय तो वह चुप हो जाती है, परन्तु यह फसाद का व्यवहार अगली बार फिर होता है और निरन्तर बढ़ रहा है।

जब उसके परिवार वालों ने इस व्यवहार का वर्णन उसके स्पेशल ऐज्यूकेटर के साथ किया तो उन्हें 'विलोपन' नियम अपनाने को कहा गया। परिवार के सब ही सदस्यों ने एक होकर बहुत नियमित रूप से इस व्यवहार की उपेक्षा की।

पहले पहले तो जोहरा का व्यवहार और बढ़ा, वह और जोर से, और उत्तेजना से फसाद खड़े करने लगी पर लगातार कुछ न मिलने पर उसे समझ आया कि इस व्यवहार का कुछ लाभ नहीं।

जोहरा को अन्य समय जब वो ट्रेनिंग में रहती, तो उसे पेप्सी का "इशारा" या "संकेत" सिखाया गया। वह समझ गई कि पेप्सी मांगने के लिए साईन या इशारे द्वारा काम चलता है। शुरू में उसकी मां हमेशा पेप्सी साथ रखती और इशारा करने पर जोहरा को पेप्सी प्राप्त होता।

धीरे धीरे जोहरा ने सीखा पेप्सी का इन्तजार करना और समझना कि पेप्सी कब मिलेगा।

इस उदाहरण में ज़ाहिर है कि जोहरा एक अबोली बच्ची है। इसलिए उसे इशारे सिखाना जरूरी है। बहुत से अबोले बच्चे अनुचित व्यवहार के स्थान पर इशारों या कार्ड द्वारा कम्यूनिकेट करते हैं।

'विलोपन' नियम का पालन करने से पहले इन बातों पर ध्यान दें :-

1. क्या इस व्यवहार के लिए विलोपन नियम उचित है ?
2. क्या बच्चे के परिवार के सभी सदस्य नियमित रूप से इस नियम का पालन कर सकते हैं ?
3. आरम्भ में जो विलोपन विस्पोट होगा (व्यवहार का बढ़ना) क्या उसे परिवार झेल सकेगा ?
4. क्या व्यवहार की उपेक्षा बच्चे के लिए खतरा पैदा कर सकती है ?

अंकों का अध्ययन

प्रीति सिवाच

अंकों को हम अपने आसपास के वातावरण में प्रयोग होते हुए देखते हैं। कहीं किताबों में, गाड़ियों पर, कैलेंडर पर या टेलीफोन पर अंक हमारे आसपास लिखे पाये जाते हैं। हमारे ऑटिस्टिक बच्चे भी इन अंकों को देखते हैं, परन्तु आम बच्चों की तरह असानी से उन्हें पहचानना नहीं सीख पाते। इसलिए सबसे पहले हमें उन्हें नम्बर पहचान या अंकों की पहचान सिखानी होगी।

इसके कुछ मुख्य तथ्य इस प्रकार हैं :

1. गिनती को कठस्थ कराना या रटवाना

इसमें हम बच्चों को एक से दस तक (1-10) अंकों की गिनती को रटवा के सम्पूर्ण करवाते हैं। झूला लेते समय, सीढ़ी चढ़ते समय या ताली बजवाते हुए हम एक से दस की गिनती सुना सकते हैं। सोते समय बच्चे को सहलाते हुए भी यह कर सकते हैं। बहुत से गाने और कविताएँ भी गिनती पर आधारित होते हैं और उन्हें गाकर भी 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10, सिखाया जा सकता है।

जो बच्चे बात दोहराते हैं (इकोलेलिया), वह तो गिनती बोलकर सुना सकते हैं यदि उनके आगे आप गिनती बोलें।

2. गिनती की पहचान

बच्चों के साथ गिनती बोलकर या गाकर के हम उन्हें गिनती सिखाते हैं। इससे अगला कदम है "अंकों की पहचान"। हमें गिनती बोलने के साथ साथ पहचान के लिए कुछ तरीके अपनाने होंगे।

कार्ड द्वारा :- हम सफेद कागज पर काली बोल्ड कलम (काला मोटा स्केच पैन) द्वारा अंक लिखने हैं। प्रत्येक कार्ड 4 इंच + 4 इंच का लगभग हो। प्रत्येक कार्ड पर एक ही अंक हों। इस प्रकार दस कार्ड 1 से 10 तक तैयार करने होंगे। आप चाहें तो केवल 1 से 5 तक भी पहले करवा सकते हैं।

कुछ ऑटिस्टिक बच्चे रेग्मार्क (सैन्ड पेपर) की आकृतियाँ (अंकों की शेप्स) जो कि कार्ड पर चिपकाये जायें, उनको छूकर सीख सकते हैं। इसी तरह किसी विशेष पोत या बुनावट के कपड़े पर 1 से 5 या 10 तक की आकृतियों को काटके फिर कार्ड पर चिपकाया जाय। बच्चा इन कार्ड को देखकर व छूकर के अंकों की पहचान सीखता है। इन कार्डों को बच्चे को एक एक करके दिखायें और स्पर्श करवायें। साथ ही अंक का नाम भी बोलें। ऐसे करने के कुछ दिन बाद बच्चे के सामने दो या तीन

कार्ड रखें और उसे निर्देश दे "दो दिखाओ" या "टच टू" (दो को छू लो) या "चार उठाओ। इस तरह के रिसेप्टिव या ग्रहणशील निर्देश द्वारा आपको पता चलेगा कि बच्चा 1 से 10 अंक (या 1 से 5) पहचान लेता है।

अंकों को क्रम में लगाना भी सिखाया जा सकता है। हमने पहले बच्चे को 1 से 10 नम्बर रटवायें, फिर उनका आकार पहचान दिलाया। अब इन दोनों क्रियाओं के बाद वह अंकों को क्रमानुसार आसानी से लगा पायेगा। इसे हम एक कार्य पत्र (वर्कशीट) द्वारा भी करवा सकते हैं।

1	2	3	4	5
1	3	4	5
1	2	3	5

बच्चा खाली स्थान भरेगा। यही वह लिख सकता है तो लिखकर अन्यथा दो या तीन परिधियों में से सही अंक वाली पर्ची चुनकर लगा सकता है।

3. अंकों का कॉन्सेप्ट (अंकों का प्रत्यय या संकल्पन)

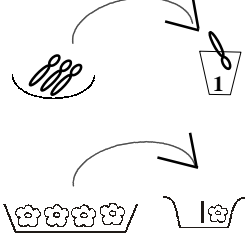
अंकों की आकृतियों की पश्चात उनका कॉन्सेप्ट या संकल्पन (सही मूल्य) सीखने की बारी आती है। यही हम किसी ऑटिस्टिक बच्चे को कहें, "दो आलू लाना" तो बच्चे का रट्टा हुआ ज्ञान या अंकों की आकृति काम नहीं आयेगी। ऐसे में बच्चे को ज्ञान चाहिए जिसके द्वारा वह बहुत से आलूओं में से दो निकालकर लाये। यही किसी चित्र में तीन फूल एक बगीचे में दिखें तो पूछने पर बच्चा बता सके कि चित्र में तीन फूल हैं। इसके लिए आवश्यक है कि अंकों का कॉन्सेप्ट सीखा जाये। इसे सिखाने के तरीके और चरण नीचे दिये गये हैं। हम एक समय पर एक ही अंक सिखायेंगे।

क) एक ही तरह की वस्तुएँ (जैसे बटन, मोती, चम्मच इत्यादि) इकट्ठे करें। बच्चे को सामने बिठायें। एक डिब्बे या प्लेट पर अंक '1' लिखें या '।' का लेबल लगायें। दूसरे डिब्बे में एक सी वस्तुएँ रखी हुई दिखें। अब बच्चे के सामने इनमें से '।' निकालें। इस प्रकार एक बटन, दिखाएँ और बोलें "एक"। फिर उस एक बटन को '।' लेबल लगे डिब्बे



में डाल दें। इस प्रकार एक बटन, एक की आकृति और एक अंक का नाम, इन तीनों में बच्चा सम्बन्ध बनाना शुरू करता है।

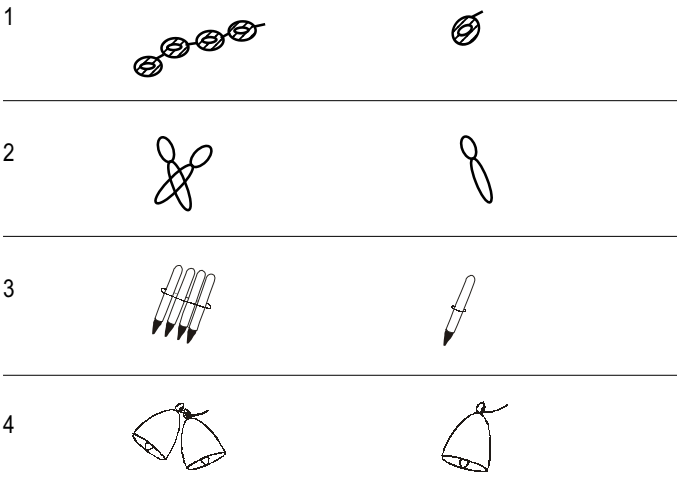
ख) 'क' चरण में जैसे हमने बटन द्वारा बच्चे को एक का कॉन्सेप्ट सिखाना शुरू किया है, वैसे ही अन्य और वस्तुओं से सिखायें।



ग) चरण 'क' और 'ख' में टीचर ने 'बहुत' सी वस्तुओं में से '1' निकालकर किसी विशेष डिब्बे में डाली। अब यही क्रिया बच्चे से करवाई जायेगी।

बच्चे के सामने अनेक (परन्तु एक ही जैसी) वस्तुयें रखें और उसे एक लेने को बोलें। सही बच्चा एक से अधिक उठाता है, तो उसके हाथ से फालतू निकालें और केवल एक रहने दें। फिर बोलें यह "एक"

घ) इस चरण में हम एक बारी में बच्चे के सामने दो जोड़े वस्तुएँ इस तरह पेश करते हैं:-



बच्चे को कहें 'एक' लो। यही वह न समझे तो एक बार स्वयं कर दिखायें। इन चित्रों में एक बात विशेष रूप से याद रखने वाली है- हमने एक से अधिक वस्तुएँ बांधी हैं, पर एक वस्तु पर भी धागा या रबर बैंड लगाया है। यदि ऐसा नहीं किया तो बच्चा शायद एक की पहचान किये बिना, वहीं वस्तु उठायेगा जिसमें कुछ न बंधा हो।

हमें कैसे पता चलेगा कि बच्चे को 'एक' का कॉन्सेप्ट या मूल्य समझ आ गया है ?

यदि बच्चे के 80 प्रतिशत उत्तर सही हों तो हम मान सकते हैं कि उसने सीख लिया है।

च) अन्य क्रियाएँ या ऐक्टिविटीज

एक-एक अनुकूलता : एक पंक्ति में गिलास रखें या कोई ऐसा डिब्बा लें जिसमें इकाईयां बनी हों। ऐसी इकाईयों का डिब्बा आईस ट्रे का प्रत्येक खांचा या फिर पंक्ति में लग हर एक गिलास) में एक चम्मच या ट्रे के प्रत्येक खांचे में एक मोती डालें। वस्तु डालते समय बोलें "पुट वन" (एक डालो)

- अंक ज्ञान की व्यापकता या सामान्यता यह जरूरी है कि बच्चा अंकों के ज्ञान को घर के काम काज में या कही और दोहराते रहें और प्रयोग करते रहें।

उदाहरण :

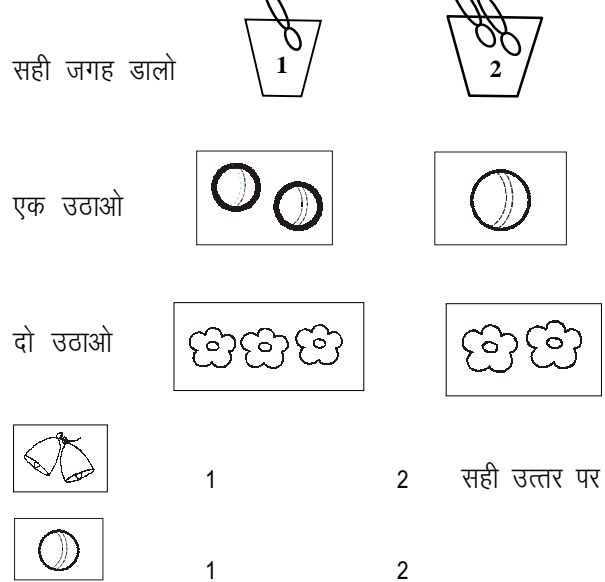
- 1) घर पर बच्चे को बोला जाय कि प्लेट से पापा को एक बिस्कुट दें।
- 2) यदि बच्चा चित्रों में रुचि रखता हो पूछें कि चित्र में कितने...हैं।
- 3) बच्चे को बोलें : "किचन से एक गिलास लाओ" या "एक ताली बजाओ"।

अंक '2' का कॉन्सेप्ट

जिस तरह से हमने एक अंक का कॉन्सेप्ट सिखाया, ठीक वैसे ही अंक दो का कॉन्सेप्ट सिखाया जायेगा।

जब बच्चा 80 प्रतिशत सही उत्तर देने लगे, अंक '2' की पहचान व कॉन्सेप्ट के विषय में, तब हमें 1 और 2 की पहचान एक साथ मिली जुली क्रियाओं द्वारा करनी होगी।

उदाहरण :



HELP LINE



Q My doctor has told me that my daughter who is three is autistic. P does not speak. But she communicates well by mostly taking me by the arm to whatever she wants. The doctor who gave the diagnosis said this is what children with autism do. But I have seen children without autism also take their mothers hand to show them what they want.

A What you say is true. Children without autism also may take an adult by the hand towards something they want. So in that sense it is a 'normal' way of communicating. But if you observe children without autism you will notice that while they pull you by the hand their intention is not merely to get what they want, but also to draw the adult's attention to what they want. While they pull the adult by the hand to whatever it is they want they will also look towards the adult to see if the person is looking. The adult is not merely an 'object' to get what they want, which is how the child with autism deals with the adult.

Q My son is five years old and going to a regular school. I go with him and stay the whole day. He is coping well especially when he has work to do. But at other times like at tiffin time after he finishes eating he pushes the children. If any of the children touch him or make any kind of physical contact with him then he might hit them or push them away.

He sometimes has a tantrum at school when he wants to do or take something and is not allowed to do it.

A What we need to look at is what purpose does the pushing serve for your child. Does he push other children because he has difficulty in dealing with proximity? Or could your son be pushing other children to actually play with them. It could be an inappropriate way of trying to make contact. The behaviour might be getting reinforced by some predictable reaction that follows on the behaviour and therefore he continues to do it. Also it is possible that unstructured time is hard for him to deal with. Does he have such behaviors when he is in structured work time?

So ideally you want to observe and try and figure out the purpose behind the behaviour. Based on whatever could be the reason you could do a number of things. You can

teach him to communicate appropriately – with pictures, objects, or signs, so that he could communicate that he wants to be left alone. You can work on appropriate social skills so that he learns what to do when he wants to interact with the other children. You can try and structure his free time at school perhaps using an object schedule, and also work on teaching him to keep himself occupied. This way he will know what is to happen, for how long, and what will happen next. The predictability will reassure him and help take care of difficult behaviours.

You can teach him an alternative and appropriate behaviour to replace his existing behaviour. You could also try using social stories to teach him appropriate behaviours. For more information on using social stories check out: *Autism Network, Vol VII No 1 April 2000.*

The tantrums can again be helped by teaching communication and also by the use of structure so he knows what will happen and when. In addition you could observe whether he eventually gets what he wants by tantrumming as that could be increasing the behaviour. In that case you would need to ensure that he does not get what he wants – consistently, every time. And when he wants something, does not get it, and does not tantrum either, then he could be reinforced in some way for his 'smart' behaviour.

Q My son is five years old and diagnosed with autism. From last year he is getting occupational therapy and speech therapy.

He can read A to Z, 1 to 100 and sing all the cinema songs and nursery rhymes. His memory is good. He knows how to switch on the computer connect the cables and play games on the computer. He understands what we are telling him and whenever he needs something like computer, toys, TV, he only asks those people who are very close to him.

His only problem is his communication. He will only say things like: "Give me water", "Switch on the TV", "Switch on the computer" etc. He lies down on the floor and pushes the toy car and moves his eyes along the wheel of the car. He never looks at people's faces. When he is looking at what he likes it is very difficult to divert his attention to us.

He is going to a special school. He follows instructions like sit down, jump, stand, etc but he never answers questions. He only repeats the question which teacher has asked. If you ask him what is your name? he will say "what is your name." It is the same at home. I suspect this may be because all the time his concentration is on other things.

Please advise how to train him to behave and to develop his communication skill.

A It is good to know that your son is receiving Occupational Therapy and Speech Therapy. He will benefit from these interventions especially if the concerned professionals are aware of his Sensory and communication needs.

As you have mentioned your son can sing rhymes and has some need based speech. Therefore you can understand that it is not his speech but communication that is affected. He needs to follow a program that addresses this need: that is, understanding the meaning and purpose of language and using it with intent.

Not looking at other people is often a common difficulty. Encourage him, praise him when he actually looks and interacts with others and not pester him to give a look. Also it will be good for others to bend down to his eye level when addressing him. When speaking to him use slow, specific, clearly enunciated speech.

Too many instructions or verbal overload may be confusing. He may need time to respond and if pushed too much he may just decide not to do so.

Give him choices to communicate. For example when going to a shop ask him: "Do you want a chocolate or chips?" At times let him fill in a word. For example when he is looking for a favorite toy or a food item or a person you can say: "Want ---". He might fill in the word.

If he enjoys looking at a book picture talk can help. Label things seen in the picture and then ask him what has been talked about.

Q I care for a 15-month-old that displays unusual behavior or reactions to people. He screams continually during naptimes, does not like people other than parents, grandmother and is adjusting to me. He screams constantly when left with anyone else. Screams when other small children try to play with him or touch him, although this has improved slightly. Screams when parent or myself are

out of sight. Also, he becomes very angry and head bangs objects repeatedly, ie. wood steps, door, floor, coffee table, walls. He looks for somewhere to hit his head on when angry. This morning he has hit his head 12-15 times on various things.

Could these be symptoms of Autism or Asperger's? At times he appears and acts normally, so I'm bewildered.

A It is difficult to reach any conclusion without actually seeing the child. However, some of the things you could look out for are does he reach out in anticipation of being picked up? Does he go limp when someone picks him up? Or does his body go stiff when picked up. How does he respond to attempts to communicate? Does he use speech? If yes does he use speech to communicate? And gestures? Does he smile? Was he late to smile? Does he avoid the gaze of people? Does he cuddle?

15 months is early days but there seems to be something going on here. It is important that you have an experienced diagnostician look at him.

Q I have a young child in my daycare. I am not sure if he has autism. I have done some observation of his behaviours with a checklist I found regarding Autism. I would say based on the checklist, he only displays 2-3 behaviors, which could also be learned behavior.

He seems to be a very unhappy baby. I doubt the parents would do anything about having him evaluated by a doctor, they're not the most proactive parents. I have had many problems with them and their lack of parenting with their old child. I've made the decision to disenroll this family. This child is just too disruptive to my daycare.

A I can understand your frustration. At the same time it must be so very difficult to parent this child. There is a good chance the parents suspect there is something not quite right but are afraid to find out. Often people feel – if I ignore this maybe it will go away. Also when you have a disruptive child the message parents often get is that there must be something in their parenting qualities that leads to the behaviours. That makes it even more difficult to ask for help.

When a 14 month old is exhibiting the behaviours you describe there is a very good chance there is some developmental issue happening here and the parents need help. See if you could – without the parents feeling threatened – suggest someone they could see at the earliest.

Understanding Relationship Development Intervention

A Workshop: 22 July 2006

&

Relationship Development Intervention

Individual Consultations: July 2006

There is increasing awareness of the crucial importance of enhancing Social Skills in individuals with autism. Breaking away from traditional treatment methods, **Relationship Development Intervention™ (RDI)** has moved beyond simply teaching children scripted behaviors with limited value in many real-life interactions. RDI's vision is a quality of life for our children that we all take for granted for ourselves – experiencing delight, sense of pride, comfort, or satisfaction from our relationships and social interactions. RDI thus focuses on getting children to learn the motivations behind all social behaviour: why we work so hard to maintain a friendship, for instance. While RDI is helpful to all children on the spectrum, it may be especially useful to educators and parents of mainstreamed children who often begin to have difficulties in their social interaction leading to possible exclusion.

The RDI developmental model targets deficits such as emotional referencing, social coordination, declarative language, flexible thinking, executive information processing and emotional memory. The goal of RDI is

to provide individuals with ASD the cognitive, emotional, communicative and social tools needed to lead a fully inclusive life that their disorder typically deprives them of. This dynamic program is accomplished through measurable therapeutic objectives that are delivered in a gentle, loving manner that builds on the power of human engagement. Additional information on RDI can be found at: <http://www.rdiconnect.com>

Thomas A. Brown

Mr Brown is Executive Director of the Autism Support Center, a nonprofit organisation that specializes in the treatment of children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorders. Mr Brown has worked with children with disabilities for twenty-six years and published research related articles. He is a Certified Relationship Development Intervention™ Provider.

Registration

For details of registration please fill the form below and mail along with a self addressed envelope to Action for Autism.

----- CUT HERE -----

PRE-REGISTRATION FORM

Do fill this form in **BLOCK LETTERS** and mail, with a self-addressed stamped envelope to:
Action For Autism, Sector 5 Jasola Vihar, Behind Sai Niketan, New Delhi 110025

Name _____ (Tick relevant box) Parent Professional

Address _____

Tel _____ Email: _____

If parent, name of child _____ Child's DOB _____

Do you want an individual consultation for your child YES NO (Tick relevant box)

Do you require accommodation YES/ NO Do you require childcare YES/ NO

Annual Training Workshop for Parents & Professionals

Venue: AFA, Sector 5 Jasola Vihar, Behind Sai Niketan New Delhi 110025

23 - 26 September 2006

AFA's annual workshops are an eagerly awaited event each year. The workshops build on an understanding of ASD and work through teaching various cognitive, communication and daily living skills. The workshops are free of jargon, and illustrated with practical examples based on AFA's hands-on experience and exposure to children with autism of varying ages and across the spectrum, and follow a format of lectures, a demonstration class, video clips, question and answer sessions and discussions.

Individual consultations on the last day of the workshop, will be available at no extra charge to those families who book in advance.

Childcare will be available during workshop hours for families who find it difficult to leave their children at home. Childcare is open to children with special needs as well as their siblings. Please register in advance. Information about your child's special needs will have to be given at the time of booking so that adequate arrangements can be made. Last date for availing childcare 10 September. Childcare will not be available to on-the-spot registrants.

Accommodation: Limited number of rooms from noon of 22 September to noon of 26 September at the Indian Social Institute at Rs 1500/- per bed (twin sharing) and Rs 3000/- (double room) for a four night stay with breakfast. Last date for booking accommodation 5 September 2006.

Daycare charges: Rs 200/- per child, per day

Registration Costs

- *Parents:* Rs1750/- per parent attendee (Rs 1400/- for life members & full annual members)
- Rs 3000/- per parent couple (Rs 2500/- for life members & full annual members)
- *Non parents:* Rs 2500/- per non-parent attendee (Rs 2200/- for life members & full annual members)
- Rs2300/- for each attendee from an organization that has taken membership if more than one person attends
- All registrations received after 31 August 2006: Parents 2500/- and Non-Parent Rs 3000/-

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Do fill this form in BLOCK LETTERS and mail, with a self-addressed stamped envelope to:

Action For Autism, Sector 5 Jasola Vihar, Behind Sai Niketan, New Delhi 110025

Name _____ (Tick relevant box) Parent Professional

Address _____

Tel _____ Email: _____

If parent, name of child _____ Child's DOB _____

If professional, name of organisation _____

Please find enclosed a Demand Draft No _____

dated _____ drawn on _____ Bank _____

Do you require accommodation YES/ NO

Do you require childcare YES/ NO

MEMBERSHIP TO AFA

To continue to receive 'Autism Network' please complete the application below, cut or photocopy, and return it to us as soon as possible.

MEMBERSHIP DETAILS

Parents: Associate Member – Annual: Rs 150/-, Full Member – Annual: Rs 500/-, Life Member: Rs 5000/-

Professionals: Associate Member – Annual: Rs 150/-, Full Member – Annual: Rs 1000/-, Institutional Member – Annual: Rs 2000/-, Overseas Membership – Parents \$ 30, Professionals \$ 50

Associate Members receive copies of Autism Network and information on all upcoming events and activities. Full Members, Life Members, Overseas Members and Institutional Members are in addition, entitled to concessionary rates for AFA events and workshops.

New Renewal Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

State _____ Pin/Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

I am a: (tick all that apply)

Parent Relative _____

Professional _____

Other _____

If you are a parent of a person with autism, please answer:

Child's name _____ Sex _____

Date of birth _____

Diagnosis (if known) _____

• I wish to become a member of AFA and enclose:

Rs 150/- Rs 500/- Rs 1000/- Rs 2000/-

Rs 5000/-

(Send Demand Drafts Only) Draft No: _____

Dated _____ On Bank _____

Amount in words _____

• I wish to give a contribution to AFA _____

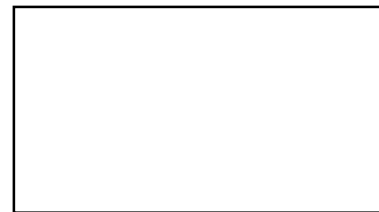
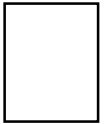
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