

MUSIC THERAPY TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN PERSONS WITH AUTISM

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CHILDREN WITH AUTISM EXPERIENCE THE FOLLOWING IMPAIRMENTS

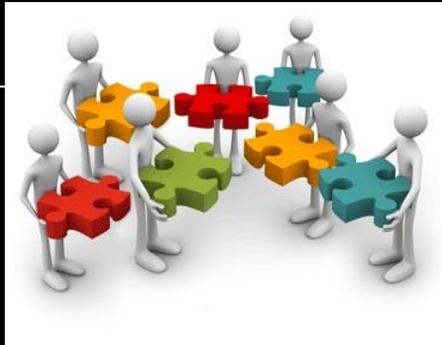
1. Difficulty in social relationships and social interactions
2. Difficulty with verbal and nonverbal communication
3. Restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior



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INTENTIONAL COMMUNICATION

- Involves coordinated attention to objects, actions or persons
- Includes use of gestures, eye gaze, non-verbal actions and vocalizations
- Is a precursor to verbal communication



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SESSION CONCEPTS

To improve intentional communication skills

the child needs to gain understanding in...

1. THEORY OF MIND
2. JOINT ATTENTION

To establish intentional communication

the therapist needs to use...

3. STRUCTURED, YET FUNCTIONAL METHODS

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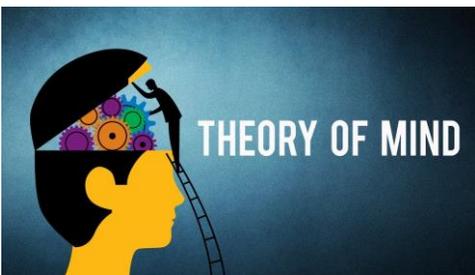
Theory of Mind: Definition

“Theory of mind” is the ability ...

- *to attribute mental states (beliefs, intents, desires, pretending, knowledge, etc.) to oneself and others*
- *to understand that others have beliefs, desires, intentions, and perspectives that are different from one's own*

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TO GRASP ***THEORY OF MIND***



A person must know that...

- Seeing, hearing and feeling can be directed selectively to another
- Attention can be directed and shared by the act of pointing or eye gaze

Directed attention and interests of another is an underlying motive behind all human communication

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Joint Attention (JA)

Is a precursor to understanding “Theory of Mind”

- Is critical for social development, language acquisition and cognitive development
- Shared focus of 2 individuals on an object by means of eye-gazing, pointing or other verbal/non-verbal indications

JA action example: An individual gazes at another individual, points to an object and then returns their gaze to the individual.

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Techniques to encourage natural Joint Attention

1. Follow the child’s lead
2. Talk about what the child is doing
3. Imitate the child’s utterances and actions
4. Expand on the child’s utterances
5. Manipulate the environment to engage the child

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Using Joint Attention

Music intervention to help develop understanding of Theory of Mind

- *Pentatonic bell improvisation* (Call & Response/Echo experience)

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Structured Yet Functional: A Treatment for Communication Impairment in Autism

Ogletree, B. & Oren, T (1998), *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*

- Structure – the degree to which the therapist controls stimuli, response acceptability and response consequences
- Functionality – the degree to which the therapist uses natural events, objects and consequences in the pursuit of practical goals within typical session routines

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Basic Principles of Structured, Yet Functional Method

- **Use activities the child enjoys**
 - Activities that the child enjoys reinforce participation which increases the potential for language learning
- **Establish a predictable routine**
 - Nonlinguistic concepts are a prerequisite to functional language development
 - Play provides a foundation for learning language

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To provide Structured, yet Functional treatment

The therapists needs to...

- Create interactive interventions that occur within predictable routines
- Apply techniques of varied directiveness
- Pursue practical communication and language goals

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Routines

- Defined as ritualized interaction patterns that occur in arranged environments
- Should have identified start and end points
- Should have shared focus on objects and events
- Should have opportunities for turn-taking between therapist and client
- Should incorporate natural events, objects and consequences

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During predictable routines

- Memory and processing demands are reduced
- Opportunities for specific language learning is available

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During less predictable routines

- The child is exposed to more varied language use
- Boundaries are expanded which helps the child achieve greater flexibility

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Turn Taking

(establish *Joint Attention* with a predictable routine to help develop *communication skills*)

EXAMPLE: Music intervention to help establish understanding and expectation of turn-taking

- Down By the Bay
 - Echo song (turn taking)

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Techniques using Structured, yet Functional method

Once a child begins to anticipate turn-taking, the therapist can ...

1. Delay with expectant waiting
2. Use novel objects or actions
3. Omit or forget a critical object needed
4. Sabotage materials so they do not work as expected

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Music Intervention Examples

- Four in a Boat
 - *use of novel actions*
 - *delay with expectant waiting*
- Leader of the Band
 - *turn taking and imitate the child's actions*
- Jump Down, Turn Around
 - *use of novel actions*
 - *manipulate the environment to engage the child*
 - *omit a critical object*
 - *sabotage materials so they don't work as expected*

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Examples

- What Do You Do
 - *delay with expectant waiting*
 - *expand on the child's utterances*
- I Have a Dinosaur
 - *talk about what the child is doing*

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Examples

- I Have a Word and I Can Spell
 - *expand on child's utterances*
 - *delay with expectant waiting*
- Limber Louie
 - *use of novel objects and actions*

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Review of session concepts

To improve intentional communication skills, the child needs to gain understanding in the following areas...

- Joint Attention
- Theory of Mind

To establish intentional communication, the therapist needs to...

- Structured, yet Functional method

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Process to establish intentional communication

1. Follow the child's lead
2. Talk about what the child is doing
3. Imitate the child's utterances and actions
4. Expand on the child's utterances
5. Establish a predictable routine using turn-taking
6. Manipulate the environment to engage the child
 - Delay with expectant waiting
 - Use novel objects or actions
 - Omit or forget a critical object needed
 - Sabotage materials so they do not work as expected

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References

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