

Early intervention methods of Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Introduction

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a neurological condition in the brain that affects how people behave, communicate, and learn. The abilities and needs of autistic people vary and can change over time. Some can live independently with interventions that improve basic skills, while others have severe challenges that require chronic support. Symptoms can appear in early childhood and can vary widely. ASD is usually diagnosed before the age of five, symptoms such as delay in speech, social skills, and noticeable behaviors. The early years of a child's life are a crucial period for brain development, because the brain is more responsive to learning during this time. Due to this, early intervention has become a crucial factor in improving outcomes for children with autism. Early interventions are therapies and support provided from a young age to help children develop essential skills in communication, interaction, and every day activities. This paper summarizes different early intervention methods for Autism spectrum disorders and how they can improve development. (Yitz Diena)

Main intervention methods

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Therapy

One of the most widely used early intervention methods for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder is Applied Behavior Analysis Therapy. ABA is a therapy that focuses on teaching specific skills and behaviors based on the science of actions while trying to reduce behaviors that interfere with learning and daily life. Therapists use reinforcement strategies to encourage positive behaviors, such as communication, social skills, and self-care that are followed by something that is rewarded. Individuals will be more likely to repeat the positive behavior. It also tries to reduce harmful or inappropriate behaviors with continued practice. It can be understood through the A-B-Cs, A stands for antecedent, B stands for behavior, and C stands for consequence. For example, an antecedent is when a parent tells the child, "It's time to turn off

the iPad and start homework.” Behavior is when the child starts crying and refuses to put the iPad down. The consequence is when the parent gives the child one more minute and then takes away the iPad. ABA works especially well when started early because young children’s brains are more flexible and still developing, making it easier to learn new skills and form lasting behavior patterns. Research shows that ABA therapy can lead to significant improvement in language and social abilities. Helping children with independence and better adapt to the environment. (Autism Speaks)

Speech and Language Therapy

Many children with Autism spectrum disorder experience challenges with communication, making speech and language therapy an essential early intervention method. This type of therapy focuses on improving both verbal and nonverbal communication skills, including speaking clearly, understanding language, and interacting with others. According to Autism Speaks, This therapy begins with a speech language pathologist that evaluates discrete goals. Some examples of speech therapy include strengthening muscles in the mouth area to make clearer speech sounds, corresponding emotions with expressions, understanding body language, responding to questions, and adjusting tone. Alternative methods using pictures or technologies to communicate is known as Alternative Augmentative Communication (AAC). Some of the methods are: sign language, picture exchange communication system, and ipads. (Autism Speaks, “Speech Therapy | Autism Speaks”) NIH also explains that speech language therapy can improve skills such as forming sentences, expressing emotions, and using language while socializing, as well as nonverbal communication like eye contact and body language. (R)

Occupational Therapy

Occupational therapy is another important early intervention method for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, performed by a licensed Occupational Therapist, focusing on helping

individuals develop the skills needed for everyday life. According to Autism Speaks, occupational therapy works on cognitive, physical, social, and motor skills to improve independence and participation in daily activities. Therapists begin by evaluating a child's abilities in areas such as learning, play, self-care, and interaction with the environment. Then create personalized goals based on their needs. OT commonly targets skills like dressing, eating, grooming, and fine motor tasks such as writing or using tools. It also helps children manage sensory processing challenges, such as sensitivity to sounds, textures, or lights. This can affect children's daily functioning. OT doesn't require demonstration in a specific place; it can be practiced outside of therapy sessions at home or school. They can help evaluate issues and therefore design better treatment plans. ("Occupational Therapy (OT)")

Social Skills and Play Therapy

Social skills and play therapy are important early intervention methods for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, it helps children understand emotions, form relationships, and interact with people. Children with ASD often have difficulties with attention, imitation, and understanding body language. Through activities such as pretend play, role playing, games, and peer interaction to create natural opportunities for children to practice social behaviors like sharing, taking turns, and recognizing emotions. According to research, play is strongly connected to development of attention imitation and understanding nonverbal actions. Children with ASD often show differences in play behaviors such as limited imaginative play or repetitive actions, which affect their ability to build relationships. Play therapy can help adjust these unwanted behaviors while allowing children to learn in an engaging environment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this article aimed to investigate how various methods of early intervention could help children with Autism Spectrum Disorder develop effectively. Methods such as

Applied behavior analysis, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and social skills and play therapy each target different areas of need, including behavior, communication, daily living skills, and social interactions. When these interventions are introduced early they take advantage of key periods of brain development, allowing children to learn skills more effectively and more easily. Therefore, early intervention is important in helping children with ASD become more independent.

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