Treating the Whole Child: An Integrated, Flexible Treatment Approach to Children with ASD

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Abstract
It has been argued that clinicians should use caution in employing dynamic psychotherapy in the treatment of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). At the same time, some authors have argued that a psychodynamic approach can contribute to developmental gains for children with ASD (Hoffman & Rice, 2012), especially when used in conjunction with a developmental approach (Alvarez, 1996; Crown, 2009). It has furthermore been argued that when clinicians are able to keep both psychodynamic and neurodevelopmental concepts and approaches in mind, rather than relying too heavily on one or the other, psychodynamic work has a place for children with ASD (Drucker, 2009). This paper uses case material from my work as a therapist with two children with ASD-like symptoms. Examples of how Floortime- and psychodyamically-informed strategies benefited these children lay the foundation for an argument that training for and practice of child therapy should be looked at through both a developmental and a psychodynamic lens.

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Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder are often restricted, rigid, and even obsessive in their behaviors, activities, and interests. Symptoms may include: Repetitive body movements (hand flapping, rocking, spinning); moving constantly. Fascinated by spinning objects, moving pieces, or parts of toys (e.g. spinning the wheels on a race car, instead of playing with the whole car). Hyper- or hypo-reactive to sensory input (e.g. reacts badly to certain sounds or textures, seeming indifference to temperature or pain). How children with Autism Spectrum Disorder play. Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder tend to be less spontaneous than other kids. A child with autism generally won’t respond to authority in the same way a neurotypical child would, and many traditional methods will likely backfire in the long run. Strong reactions from you will probably reinforce the behavior instead of deter it. If your voice gets louder, your face turns red or you wave your arms you’re suddenly very interesting. This can lead to hitting other children or throwing rocks on the playground when they are upset. In addition, spanking fails to take into account the reality that your child may be acting out because he or she is truly in pain or experiencing a valid need. State-by-State Guide to Insurance Laws Governing the Treatment of ASD with Applied Behavior Analysis. Find a program. Select a Degree Level.