Helping Children with ASD Become More Responsive Learners

During early childhood years, children with ASD are not making the same developmental progress as their typically developing peers. Measurable growth in important areas such as language and general knowledge occurs more slowly. Behavioral scientists have demonstrated that this slower developmental trajectory can be accelerated with an intensive and systematic approach to teaching. This approach can be utilized to enable children with ASD to learn on their own, rather than simply teaching them the information that they have not picked up through everyday experience. This would require more emphasis on “learning how to learn” skills such as attending to relevant information and learning through observing the success and mistakes of others. Motivational variables are also extremely important if their behavior is to come under the control of the kinds of social contingencies that are readily available and highly effective in shaping the behavior of typically developing children. This includes overcoming preoccupation with sensory stimulation, patterns, and rituals which interfere with children with ASD being available and motivated for learning. This presentation will describe and illustrate practical strategies which can help children with ASD become more responsive learners.

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