COMMON FEATURES OF NATURALISTIC EVIDENCE BASED TREATMENTS FOR ASD

In the field of ASD intervention, “Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Interventions” (NDBIs), such as Project ImPACT, are interventions that incorporate teaching strategies into everyday routines and play. Not only are these interventions fun, but they can be implemented anywhere – at the park, during play, or during bath time! Teaching skills in a variety of natural contexts can make it much easier for children to learn and use their new skills.

NDBI strategies are based on applied behavior analysis (ABA) and developmental theory. While many distinct interventions can be classified as NDBIs, they all share key features and teaching strategies. When performing these interventions, adults typically let the child pick an activity, take turns in play activities, and imitate the child’s actions. These types of strategies help the child have fun, stay motivated, and engage with the adult in a shared activity. When the child is interested and motivated to continue the activity, the adult can use this as a teaching opportunity and prompt the child to perform a skill (e.g. word, gesture, or play act), followed with a natural reward. Natural rewards can help children learn that their words have specific meanings (e.g. they receive a truck when they say “truck”), and it can encourage them to talk more in similar situations.

Along these lines, training parents and caregivers is a common part of these interventions. Parents and providers often collaborate to create specific goals for a child, based on what is developmentally appropriate and important to the child’s family. As children progress, parents can continue to support their learning by applying the same teaching strategies to new skills and situations.

For a more comprehensive overview of NDBIs and their history, read the Schreibman and colleagues (2015) paper titled “Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Interventions: Empirically Validated Treatments for ASD.” This paper is available to anyone for free on PubMed: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4513196

FALL 2016 NEWSLETTER
ABOUT THE MSU AUTISM RESEARCH LAB

The MSU Autism Research Lab, directed by Brooke Ingersoll, PhD, studies the development of social communication in young children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and the development of interventions to improve these skills (Project ImPACT). We are also interested in the dissemination of evidence-based interventions and the impact of ASD on the family. http://psychology.msu.edu/AutismLab/
RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

INTERVENTIONS FOR YOUNGER SIBLINGS OF CHILDREN WITH ASD

Research has shown that younger siblings of children with autism have a greater chance to develop autism than children in the general population. Given the importance of early intervention, one research question that we are asking is whether using Project ImPACT for high-risk, toddler siblings can lessen any autism symptoms that they may go on to develop later.

To investigate this question, we are working on a large-scale study that is taking place at the University of Washington and Vanderbilt University. As part of this study, all families receive standardized assessment for their younger toddler (ages 12-18 months), and half of parents are taught the Project ImPACT intervention for their younger toddler.

Although it is still ongoing, one piece of this study is interviewing parents who participate so that we can better understand parents’ motivation to participate in intervention research with their toddler; general experience in the research study; and opinion about providing “preventative” intervention to their toddler.

Preliminary results from 13 parents suggest that many parents are motivated to enroll in the study. Fewer than half of parents reported being concerned about their toddler’s development. Many parents also reported that they felt that the assessment process was educational, because it enabled them to monitor their child’s progress or because they learned about interacting with their child. Similarly, many of the parents who received the Project ImPACT program emphasized that they had a positive experience. When asked about the concept of “preventative” research, parents often described feeling torn between not wanting to change their child, but also wanting to prevent the challenges associated with ASD.

NEW RESEARCH INITIATIVE AT MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Research in Autism, Intellectual and Neurodevelopmental Disabilities, or RAIND, is a cross-campus, interdisciplinary research initiative of MSU that aims to address critical needs in the area of autism, intellectual and other neurodevelopmental disabilities in order to make important, meaningful and sustainable impact on the quality of life of individuals with these disabilities on a global basis.

As part of this initiative, various distinguished speakers will be invited to campus. These talks are open to the public. Below are two upcoming talks at MSU that may be of interest to you!

**January, 2017 from 12 to 1:30**
Dr. Catherine Lord will be presenting research on diagnosis, social and communication development, and intervention in autism spectrum disorders.

More information about the RAIND initiative, as well as details for the talks, including location and parking, can be found here: http://autism.research.msu.edu/
CURRENT PROJECTS

PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROJECT

WHAT IS IT?
Parent involvement in intervention is key to improving outcomes for children with ASD. This project, funded by the US Health Resources and Service Administration Maternal and Child Health Bureau, is designed to measure the effectiveness of different components of an internet-based program designed to improve parent involvement in intervention for families of young children with ASD.

WHAT WILL YOU DO?
Families will complete the following over a 9 month period:
- An initial intake assessment
- Participation in one of three groups over 4 to 6 months: a web-based information and support group, a self-directed training group, or a therapist-assisted training group
- 3 month follow-up assessment

TO PARTICIPATE, YOUR CHILD MUST
- Have a diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder
- Be between the ages of 18 and 72 months at intake
- Meet other inclusion criteria

FAMILIES WILL:
- Receive $25 during each assessment period ($75 total)
- Receive an initial and follow-up assessment report
- Be provided all technology if needed at no cost

If you have questions about participation, please contact Nikki Bonter by at bonterni@msu.edu or call us at 517-432-8031.

FAMILY TIDBITS

Rachel, 3 years old
Rachel has been making huge progress in her spontaneous language! Recently, we went on a walk. Rachel was narrating what she was doing the whole time. She was also saying “Hi, my name is Rachel!” to anyone who would listen!

Ivan, 2 years old
Ivan's been saying “I like … do you like?” Ex: I like a rhombus, do you like a rhombus, mommy? I like chicken nuggets, do you like chicken nuggets, daddy?” It can be anything from letters, words, apps, foods, to movies. He’s got us in stitches!

Dominic, 12 years old
Dominic used to have mommy go with him to get his haircut, but recently, daddy and Dominic have been going together! It has become one of their “father/son,” things to do. If mommy says, “can I go?” Dominic responds, “no!” That’s okay, mommy cut Dominic’s hair for about nine years and “Vince the Barber,” does a much better job!

Emerson, 5 years old
Emerson is going to school. He earned an award for communicating in the classroom and for completing assignments. He has learned to write his first and last name. He is very independent with tablets. He helps make his own schedule, and he loves watching train videos on Youtube.