

Occupational Therapy Programs for Children with Autism

Introduction –

Autism is a neurological condition and has been characterized as “triad of syndrome” involving difficulties in the areas of language, social communication and imagination.

Available literature identifies the underlying issues through “**The Iceberg Modal**” for above mentioned functional difficulties.

Some of the child psychiatrists and occupational therapists with sensory integration background suggest that many issues in ASD children are linked with modulation/ dys-regulation, and weak sensory processing in the brain.

Ornitz E. a psychiatrist at University of California, suggested that, “It is the problem of sensory registration, sensory motor modulation and sensory integration” .

While Dr. Greenspan highlighted modulation –regulation as an important aspect to facilitate on connectivity and communication.

Generally it has been observed that children with autism have difficulty modulating their behaviours, process and use the incoming information in a meaningful manner and make decisions.

The children are not able to stay calm & focused and show maladaptive behaviours.

Any unpredictable change causes sensory overload and hence self regulation/ modulation problems, which in turn results into anxiety and behaviour issues.

Issues related
To

Sensory Modulation

- a) Inability to stay calm and focused
- a) Behaviour Organization
- b) Difficulty to cope with changes
- c) Inability to cope with in a big group
- a) Avoids or seek one or more type of sensory stimulation (sensory defensiveness)
- b) Avoid eye contact

Sensory Processing / Perceptual Issues

- a) Single channeled attention
- b) Weak Sensory Integration
- c) Weak Processing of Sensory Information
- d) Shut Down
- e) Poor Attending skills
- f) Clumsy
- g) Doesn't seem to understand body language or facial expression
- h) Fidget with body & objects

Praxis Issues

- a) Poor Awareness
- b) Motor Planning Issues
- c) Shows poor self Organizational skills
- d) Postural issues
- e) Talks to self and self stimulation
- f) Rigid rituals
- g) Spatial issues

Functional Behaviour

- a) Doesn't want to engage and occupy in a purposeful manner.
- b) Avoid or seek sensation
- c) Accident Prone
- d) Avoids changes
- e) No initiation
- f) ADL & Eating Issues
- g) Being overwhelmed and shut down
- h) Social Emotional Issues

- a) Difficulty shifting attention
- b) Communication difficulties
- c) Ideation and initiation problems
- d) Inability to classify the information
- e) Inability to handle complex sequential information
- f) Difficulty in listening and following
- g) Difficulty in engaging in play

- a) Repetitive behaviours
- b) Inability to problem solve
- c) Get irritated very easily
- d) Language and social communication issue
- e) Poor handwriting
- f) Poor play skills
- g) Difficulty Making Friends

In order to help children with autism and their underlying issues, sensory integration therapy and related approaches becomes an obvious choice of treatment (Blanche)

Based on our experience, it is noticed that treatment plan has to match the need of specific group of children and to be carried out systematically. For example - Children who are young have different needs compare to older people with ASD and hence the sensory integration method is used accordingly to address the specific issues.

In order to facilitate the desired functional outcomes we integrate multiple approaches in the treatment plan .

The programs aimed to facilitate behaviour organization, language and social communication, play and coping skills in different situations by addressing the underlying issues as well as through skill training.