

Introduction

This presentation will firstly focus on what Autism is and how it affects young children and the differential behaviours they may encounter. Secondly it will look at different barriers children face today including friendship and education. Thirdly it will explain what strategies are and the importance of having strategies in place and helping children with Autism to communicate with others and the world around them. Lastly, the main focus will be on two different strategies, these being the picture exchange communication system and social stories.

Why do we have strategies

Having effective and correct early interventions and strategies in place enable children with Autism to be able to communicate with others and the world around them according to Welsh Assembly Government (2011). Similar to this, Van den Hout and Bragonje (2010) and the National Autistic Society (2018b) have the same view and state how there are different types of strategies that have being introduced to improve symptoms associated with Autism, however, Autism Spectrum (2018) state that treatments that offer a cure or recovery need to be avoided as there is no evidence to support these. Furthermore, Fouse and Wheeler (2015) believe that many parents are throwing away their money on programmes where there is no evidence that these actually work. Choosing the right strategy can be difficult and it is important to plan appropriate interventions and strategies in improving children with Autism social skills according to Golzari et al. (2015) and Autism Spectrum (2018)

Strategy 1

The first strategy will focus on Picture Exchange Communication system (PECS). PECS is a way in which Autistic children are taught to communicate by using picture cards according to Research Autism (2017). As stated by the National Autistic Society (2013) children learn best with visual support, Bondy (2002) believe this could be a reason why PECS have become a popular communication strategy for children with Autism. According to Boesh et al. (2013) there are six phases of using PECS. The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (2016) state that the first stage an adult helps their child by prompting a request and using hand over hand technique in order to guide the child and giving the picture to the listener. This is illustrated in diagram A. Olson (2013) states how Skinner advocated for reinforcement. Ambridge and Lieveen (2011) state that this could be down to rewarding the child after completing an action and will therefore encourage the child to repeat the action. Boesch et al. (2013) believe that the advantages of PECS are that they are, low cost and easy for the child to carry around enabling them to communicate wherever they are, however, Barbera (2007) believes that certain situations can stop the child from using them such as when they are swimming

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What is Autism

According to the National Autistic Society (2018a), Autism is a life long developmental disability which affects one in one hundred people in the UK as stated by Ambitious About Autism (2018). NHS (2016) states how young children are less likely to use vocal sounds and how older children have problems using non-verbal behaviours to interact with others. This could be for example; little or no contact and also difficulty in understanding other peoples facial expressions. The National Autistic Society (2018a) also state how Autism affects the way in which people communicate with others and see the world around them.

Strategy 2

The second strategy that will be discussed is Social Stories. Social Stories teach children what is expected from them in specific settings according to Raising Children (2018). As stated by the National Autistic Society (2017a) these stories are a short description of a particular situation, event or activity and includes information on what to expect in these situations. These Social Stories could also according to the National Autistic Society (2017a) help children to cope with changes that effect their routine. As previously stated by the National Autistic Society (2013), children with Autism learn best with visual support, University of Bath (2018) believe children would benefit by using Social Stories as it is a visual tool. Rymanowicz (2015) state that using photographs and descriptive words in these stories take children through real life situations. Bozkurt and Vuran (2014) believe that there are several reasons why Social Stories are effective, some of these being that they are cost and time effective and are easy to write and apply. According to recent research Golzari et al. (2015) state that Social Stories lead to improvement in Social Skills. Raising Children (2018) would agree and state that qualitative research has shown that this strategy has had a positive effect on children.

Barriers

One of the main barriers that Autistic children face today is forming friendships. Many people according to Research Autism (2016) have misconceived ideas on Autism and believe that children with Autism do not value friendship, however, the National Autistic Society (2017b) believe children with Autism do want to build friendships and that they struggle to socialise and communicate with others. Being able to interact with others requires social skills, children with Autism lack these skills according to Golzari et al. (2015) and also go on to say how not only does this hinder a child's development and lead the child into loneliness and isolation. This according to Gibbons and Corbett (2007) can have an impact on a child's emotional well being and self esteem. Another barrier in which Autistic children face today is education. Autistic children are required to follow the same curriculum in the same way as their peers according to the National Autistic Society (2017c). However, they may face some difficulties as Gibbons (2016) believe that Autistic children may not be challenged within the curriculum or find it hard in keeping up with their peers. Rudel (2011) believe many schools are unable to manage children with Autism in their classrooms specially when the child becomes disruptive or violent. Humphrey and Lewis (2008) believe that this could be down to teachers not having the appropriate support and training.

Conclusion

To conclude this presentation has shown that Autism can effect children's lives and barriers that children face when it comes to building friendships and to have an education. It has looked at the importance of why strategies are put in place in order to help children communicate. Lastly it has also looked at two strategy methods and how through research both have shown to have a positive effect on children with Autism when it comes to communication and Social Skills.



Picture A

(Mailraft Supplies,
2015)

Further reading

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