

Understanding, Education, and Encouragement: the Role of Psychotherapy in Fostering Positive Behaviors for Individuals with Autism-Spectrum Disorders

Prepared for
Autism Training Seminar: Understanding Challenging
Behaviors

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Outline

- Introduction: More Human than Otherwise...
- Common Symptoms/Manifestation of ASDs
- Common Interpersonal Experiences of Individuals with ASDs
- Common Emotional Experiences of Individuals with ASDs
- Typical Skill Deficits of Individuals with ASDs
- Typical Strengths of Individuals with ASDs
- Typical Challenging Behaviors
- The Interplay of Interpersonal/Emotional Experiences, Skill Deficits, Strengths and Behavior
- Individual Therapy: Getting Started
- Individual Therapy: General Approaches
- Individual Therapy: Techniques
- Involving Family and Providers: The Benefits
- Laying the Groundwork for Collaborative Meetings
- Collaborative Meetings: Solving Problems and Developing Skills
- Group Therapy: A Natural Environment for Growth
- Conclusion: Fitting it All Together

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Introduction: More Human than Otherwise...

- While individuals with ASDs have distinguishing characteristics that affect which interventions are likely to be effective, understanding, accepting, and respecting them as human beings first is crucial to successful treatment.
- As humans, people with autism seek experiences of belonging/security, competence/mastery, and feelings of self-worth/purpose. They also have biological drives (food, sex, etc.) and seek comfort as well as stimulation.
- The experience of autism can lead to interpersonal and emotional experiences that generate discouragement in getting needs met, fueling challenging behavior.
- Effective psychotherapy that addresses challenging behaviors focuses on understanding the motivations and experiences of people with ASDs, and providing them with understanding, encouragement and education/skills so they can meet their needs via effective and appropriate behavior.

“We are all much more simply human than otherwise, be we happy and successful, contented and detached, miserable and mentally disordered, or whatever.”

--Harry Stack Sullivan

“As out of the ordinary as these boys were, it was the sameness of their humanity that struck me...for all their awkwardness, these boys sought--and could profoundly feel—kindness, generosity, acceptance, respect, affection, and perhaps more than anything, understanding for who they were.”

--Richard Bromfield

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Bibliography/Resources

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- 9) Zaks, Sosia (2006) Life and Love: Positive Strategies for Autistic Adults Kansas: Autism Asperger Publishing Co.
- 10) Good description of Collaborative Problem-Solving: <http://www.livesinthebalance.org/what-is-collaborative-problem-solving-cps>