Best Practice Interventions for Children and Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

Choosing a helpful intervention can be hard for parents of children with an ASD. No "cure", no miracle intervention, and no "one-size-fits-all" intervention exist. Parents searching for a cure or a "miracle" are more likely to spend money on fads and trends than on interventions that can help the child.

Interventions exist that have large amounts of research to support their use with children with an ASD. Researchers call these interventions established, evidence-based interventions. The interventions work with many people with autism. Interventions showing promise but having small amounts of research are said to have emerging evidence.

Established Evidence

The following treatments and strategies are considered to be evidence-based for use with people with ASD.

1. **Antecedent Interventions includes:**
   a. Applied Behavior Analysis
   b. Behavioral Psychology
   c. Positive behavioral supports.

2. **Behavioral Interventions includes:**
   a. discrete trial teaching
   b. task analysis
   c. token economy
   d. shaping/chaining
   e. generalization training

3. **Comprehensive Behavioral Treatment for Young Children includes:**
   a. incidental teaching
   b. low student-to-teacher ratio ABA programs
   c. behavioural inclusive programs and early intensive behavioral intervention.

4. **Joint Attention Intervention** teaches a child to respond to the nonverbal social interactions of others or to initiate joint attention interactions.

5. **Modelling** uses adults or peers to demonstrate a desired behaviour in the hope that the child will imitate the behaviour shown/modeled.
   a. Incidental teaching
   b. focused stimulation
   c. embedded teaching
   d. milieu teaching

6. **Naturalistic Teaching Strategies** take place in a natural, unstructured setting.

7. **Peer Training Interventions includes:**
   a. peer networks
   b. buddy skills interventions
   c. integrated play groups
   d. peer mediated social interactions.

8. **Pivotal Response Training includes:**
   a. pivotal response teaching
   b. parent involvement in the natural environment
   c. natural language paradigm.

9. **Schedules (written words, pictures, or photographs) include** task list s that shows a series of activities or steps required to complete an activity.

10. **Self-management includes:**
    a. Tokens
    b. goal setting
    c. checklists
    d. visual prompts.

11. **Story-based interventions include:**
    a. social stories

Emerging Evidence

The following are a sample of the treatments and strategies consider having some evidence to support their use with people with ASD.

1. **Augmentative and Alternate Communication Devices** use pictures, photographs, symbols, communication books, computers, and electronic devices.

2. **Cognitive Behavioral Intervention Interventions** teaches children to change their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions through changing thought patterns.

3. **Developmental Relationship-based treatments** include**:**
    a. floor time
    b. relationship developmental intervention.

4. **Language Training** includes interventions to increase speech production or speech production and understanding.

5. **Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)** teaches a child to communicate with others using visuals.

6. **Scripting** includes verbal and/or written scripts about a social situation that the child practices repeatedly before using.

7. **Social Communication Intervention** includes teaching the child how to behave in social situations.

8. **Structured Teaching (TEACCH) -> Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication Handicapped Children** focuses on helping children increase communication skills, social awareness, and decision.

9. **Theory of Mind Training** includes teaching empathy, perspective of others, social reciprocity, and how the child's behaviour affects other people.

Explore the following sites for more detailed information regarding evidenced-based treatments and interventions.

National Standards Project (2009), *National Standards Report*

The National Autism Center. Randolph, MA. www.nationalautismcenter.org

Review of Autism Treatments Association of Science in Autism Treatment