



## Autism/Mental Health: Concrete Tools and Techniques for Direct Care

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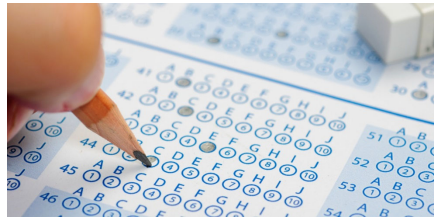
## Today's agenda

- What works and does not work when providing direct services for individuals with ASD/MH.
- Concrete skills, tools, and techniques that have proven effective in the MH/IDD population.
- How to individualize tools and techniques
- Some other considerations
  - Supporting youth aged 5-21 with MI, ASD, and IDD
  - Quick definition for terms using strength-based terms
  - Discuss implications for support

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## What is an Intellectual or Developmental Disability?

- Different capacity and functioning – either physical or intellectual
- Intellectual Developmental Disability (IDD)
  - Intellectual – different cognitive skill or Intelligence Quotient, combined with different development of adaptive behavior
  - Developmental indicates onset prior to 21



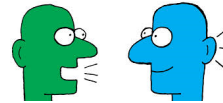
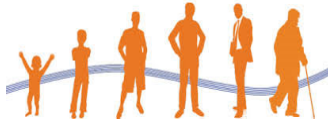
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## Further Explanation of IDD

1. “Substantial functional limitations” in three or more of the following areas of life activity
  - Self care
  - Receptive and expressive language
  - Learning;
  - Mobility;
  - Self-direction;
  - Capacity for independent living; and
  - Economic self-sufficiency.

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## What does it mean to have IDD?



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## Impact

- An estimated 12 of every 1,000 U.S. children have an IDD characterized by significant limitations in such areas as self-direction, school, work, and leisure activities, and daily-living, social, and communication skills
- 41% of children with an IDD have multiple disabilities, including psychiatric diagnoses
- Nearly 1 in 5 Children with ADHD have Autism

*For a really thorough summary of prevalence data, see Munir, 2016*

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## What Is Mental Illness (MI)?

A medical condition that disrupts thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others, and daily functioning

- Can affect persons of any age, race, religion, income, or level of intelligence
- Classified by the DSM-5 (supplemented by DM-ID)
- People may experience mental health problems that:
  - Change the way they think or understand the world around them
  - Change the way they interact with others
  - Change the emotions and feelings they have
- Analogy: there is a range of illness, from the common cold to cancer

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## Neurodevelopmental Disorders

- Autism Spectrum Disorder – symptoms in two areas and a severity rating determined by level of adaptive functioning instead of the IQ score
  - Persistent deficits in social communication and interaction across settings
  - Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities
- Social Communication Disorder
  - Difficulty engaging in verbal or nonverbal social communication without behavioral difficulties
- Individuals with these diagnoses demonstrate a range of intellectual ability and skills

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## Common Strengths Seen in People with Autism Spectrum Disorder (not required for diagnosis):

- Non-verbal reasoning skills
- Reading skills
- Perceptual motor skills
- Drawing skills
- Computer interest and skills
- Exceptional memory
- Visual spatial abilities
- Music skills

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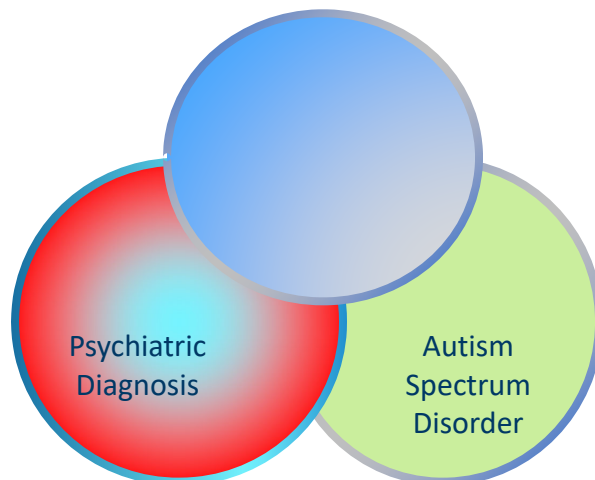
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## Common Challenges Seen in People with Autism Spectrum Disorder (not required for diagnosis):

- Atypical Social relationships
- Difficulty making transitions
- Dependence on routine
- Variability of intellectual functioning
- Uneven developmental profile (adaptive skills)
- Difficulties in sleeping, toileting, and eating
- Gastrointestinal problems

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What does this look like?



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## IDD and Mental Health and Problem Behavior

- Persons with IDD show increased rates of problem behavior compared to general population
- 10-20% persons with IDD who also have a psychiatric disorder engage in self-injury, aggression, destructive behavior severe enough to impair daily life
- Challenging behaviors are symptoms for a mental illness and may be used to make a diagnosis

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## What Helps?



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## What Do People Generally Need?

- Stress management
- Distress tolerance
- Social skills
- Communication
- Sensory management



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## What do people with IDD often need?

- Environmental structure
- Additional cues



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## Direct Instruction Techniques

1. Model → 2. Lead → 3. Test

- Use Audio (hearing), Visual (seeing), and Kinesthetic (doing) Instruction
- Fits perfectly into community settings as the instruction looks natural

### Direct Interactive Instruction

I DO



You watch & listen

We Do



Do together & I support

We Do



You do & I support

You Do

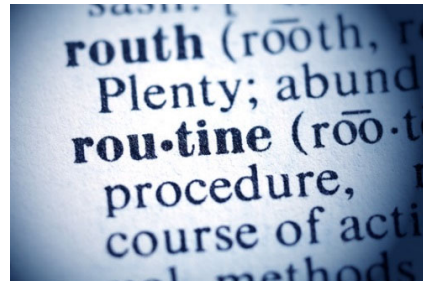


I watch & listen

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## What do people with Autism Spectrum Disorder often need?

- Routine
- Predictability
- Communication



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## Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

- Behavior Analysis grew out of the scientific study of principles of learning and behavior.
- ABA is based on experimental research literature and has proven effectiveness for many problem areas.
- Do any of you use specific credit cards with reward programs? Frequent flier programs? Store loyalty programs?



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## Some Common ABA Interventions

- Use *reinforcement*, including *differential reinforcement* and *reward plans*
- Teach *replacement behaviors* and *functional alternatives*
- Use *prompts* and *prompt fading*
- *Task analyses*
- Use *extinction* (withhold the expected reward - not the same as deprivation or punishment)
- Discrete Trial instruction



*ABA interventions should always be based on an understanding of the functional of a behavior, and possibly an FBA*

(includes information from BACB.com)

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## Additional Diagnostic and Treatment Challenges: Children and Adolescents

- Experience and exhibit symptoms differently
  - Depression in children looks like irritability/aggression instead of sadness
  - High rates of somatic symptoms, body pains, etc.
- Medication and treatment needs to be different
  - Medication may work differently
  - Therapy adapted to developmental level
- Important to see a specialist – Child psychiatrist to address these concerns

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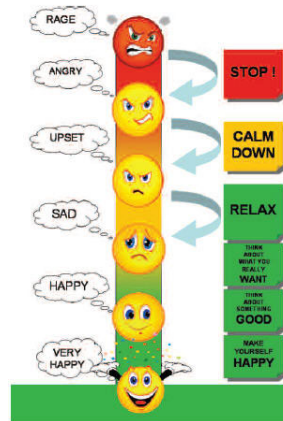
## Bridging supports together into a whole

- Speak the same language
- Focus on what will be most helpful long term
- Adapt to the person and the learning style



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## Developing self-awareness



- It's hard to relax or use other coping strategies if you don't realize how you feel and when to use them
- Teach young people to identify and label feelings
- Use visual tools or cues to help people learn to recognize the feelings
- Practice monitoring those feelings to develop consistent awareness

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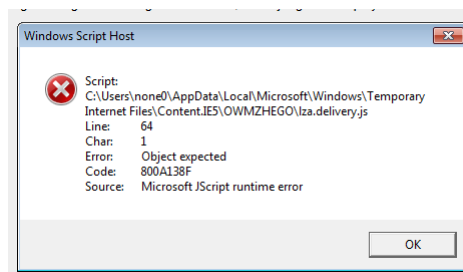
## Verbal techniques to help youth feel acknowledged and supported

1. Active Listening
2. Empathetic responses
3. Maintain a non-judgmental attitude
4. Recognize and avoid power struggles
5. Watch your posture and body language
6. Validate feelings
7. Put the choices back to the young person

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## What Doesn't Work?

- See only the disability, not the communication
- Ignore preferences and choices
- Use cookie cutter approaches
- Focus only on areas of weakness instead of strength



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