

DIR/Floortime

ATTACHMENT: DIR/Floortime Model (defines DIR and Floortime and explains the difference)

This is model that is all about high affect, focusing on individual differences, and encompassing all areas of development, including the incorporation of sensory issues. It is about inspiring the child, enticing the child to interact rather than forcing the child to interact, being so interesting that the child wants to engage. This method is not about doing things to the child or for the child but, instead, creating circumstances/the environment/opportunities where the child wants to do the things you want him/her to do (you want him/her to become engaged, more interactive).

This is an “optimistic model” that believes in the plasticity of development.

Greenspan believes that children with autism do not have as much connectivity between different areas of the brain. Believes that there is a problem of connectivity between the part of the brain that expresses affect and the parts that have to do with sensation, motor patterns, and symbol formation. There is a lack of synchrony. Believes that children with autism have more trouble connecting different parts of the brain rather than with trouble in any one area. Believes that intervention can change this and increase the connectivity. Strategy: heighten the affect to strengthen connectivity.

Functional Developmental Evaluation

ATTACHMENT: DIR/Floortime Model Functional Developmental Evaluation Chart (#1)

Evaluation should be very comprehensive

Greenspan believes 1) it is more efficient and sensible to have the same team evaluating the child as who will provide the intervention 2) it is important to rely more on your clinical judgment than on a standardized test when determining the challenges that a child has and whether they are eligible for services.

Developmental Stages

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1) D Part of the Model Power Point
- 2) The Social-Emotional Growth Chart 2
- 3) Child's Attainment of Developmental Milestone Rating Scale

Can fully master each stage

- with a broad range of emotional themes that characterize each stage
- child is using all their processing capacities

Can have constrictions or partial mastery of each or some stages

- emotional themes are not as broad as we would like
- there are constrictions in the processing capacities utilized (example: child is playing like other children who are at level 5, but shows limited motor planning and sequencing)
- still have basic core, but not using all of their processing capacities and emotional themes

Can have a deficit

- have not reached the stage

Stage Four (typically seen in children 9 to 18 months of age) - The Shared Problem-Solving/Developing a Sense of Self Stage is the level of most vulnerability for kids with autism. Children should be able to open and close at least 50 circles at this stage (children with autism can often do only 5 or 6). Watch to

see if the child can close a circle. Example of circle NOT closed: a child picks up a toy, mom makes a comment about the toy, and the child wanders away.

Profile of children with autism:

- early months: ability to persist is decreased
- then, the baby is more reactive than taking initiative in interactions
- fewer circles (5 or 6) in stage 4
- children with autism can point – so it is NOT about the mechanics of pointing. It is about what the pointing means. Do they point to show you something of interest? This is what is hard.

The degree to which we can get the first four levels working determines how a child develops symbols and not just scripted language.

Many children can reach higher levels with adults but function at a much lower level with their peers. Children in a group can disregulate each other. Children who can do at least 15 to 20 circles with an adult are ready for social interaction with peers. This doesn't mean they can't be with peers if they are at a lower level, but realize that they really aren't ready for much interaction.

Over time, we want the child to get to the stage where the relationship with the parent is more important than satisfying sensory desires. This will be when the child is maturing and better able to self-regulate. As the child gets more internal control, he gains more flexibility.

Intervention

ATTACHMENTS: Five Steps in Floortime and other info from www.coping.org
Following the Child's Lead from the Clinical Practice Guidelines from the ICDL
Getting Started in Floortime by Lisa DeFaria, LCSW
http://www.icdl.com/dirFloortime/newsletter/documents/Vol6No3-4_000.pdf (go to this link and scroll down until you come to this article)

Meet the child at the level they are on (go from the bottom up), but you can work multiple levels at a time

Recommendation for Home Program:

- 1) spontaneous, developmentally appropriate interactions
 - six to eight 20 minute sessions a day – most should be done by parents
- 2) semi-structured problem-solving interactions
 - focus on language – learning words through solving problems – three 20 minute sessions a day
- 3) motor, sensory, visual/spatial activities

Greenspan believes there can be a place for medication, nutritional interventions, ABA (but he believes that behavioral approaches don't teach thinking, a sense of humor, relatedness), TEACCH, etc. He believes that when there is a sudden change in a child's behavior that a first question should be about any changes in the environment (for example, did the house just get painted?)

The most "screen time" a young child should have is 30 to 45 minutes a day. This includes the TV and computer.

A Few Strategies:

- for children who are working on developing two-way purposeful communication: get the child involved with someone who is very animated to give an exaggerated emotional response (like you would give an 8 month old, to keep the 8 month old engaged). Over time, you won't have to use so much high affect. Back and forth is often gestural at first and not verbal.
- woo the child into relating. Use a lot of sensory and motor activities. Some children need to have activities that regulate their sensory systems going on at the same time they are interacting (for example, bouncing on a ball or swinging) and this is OK. Build on what the child is doing, no matter what it is. The more avoidant a child is, the more playful the parent has to be. First you want the child to enjoy the relatedness and then you want to open and close circles. You want a continuous flow. When you lose the gleam in the child's eye, you have to up the engagement.
- when playing with a child with autism, stretch out the words to give the child a chance to prepare. Example – when saying “ready, set, go” – draw out each word to give the child a chance to really get ready.
- when a child is pulling hair, encourage parents to place their hands on their child's hands and give gentle pressure and talk in a slow, gentle rhythm (like a slow heartbeat – both the voice and the pressure on the child's hands) so the parent is pairing their soothing voice with the physiological regulation of their hand on their child's hands. This can help the child regulate/soothe and also can calm the parent.

Other Information

Greenspan says it is OK to teach children with speech/language delays two different languages at once and that both languages will come in at the same time. He says there is a problem when parents are trying to teach their child English and English is not their primary language. What happens is that they tend to speak English in a flatter, more monotone voice and it is not as engaging for the baby to hear. Engagement is key, especially for kids with delays. Greenspan recommends that one parent use the native language that will be richer/more engaging and the other use English.

Greenspan does not believe in over-emphasizing learning a few words and focusing on rote memory skills (rote memory is not true thinking/not true problem-solving) and overlooking the foundations because this undermines the child's chance for true growth and development. First academic skill to teach: the ability to think. Thinking develops from a back and forth relationship and then language. Build academic skills after you build relationships.

Sensations are dual-coded for affect. What this means: affective experiences around a sensation influence our perception of the sensation. Neither experience occurs alone (we can't experience a sensation without also having some feeling about it).

Praxis is not just motor planning. Think more broadly. Praxis is the moment from which one faces the future with the resources gained from the past experiences. This includes not just the physical experience but the emotional context too (affect). Each person who acts will be different from others because of our individual differences.