



PACE

Parent And Child Enrichment

A Promising New Tool That Might Strengthen Deficit Areas of ASD: The ConnectorRx



PACE Seminar Series, FL
July 11, 2008



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A Promising New Tool That Might Strengthen Deficit Areas of ASD: The ConnectorRx

Presented by:
Kathi Calouri, PhD & Eric Hamblen



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Overview of the Day

- Core Deficits of ASD
- History and Development of The ConnectorRx
- Use of The ConnectorRx
- Pilot Research Results
- Impact of The ConnectorRx

Kathi Calouri, Ph.D.

- First experience with children with ASD in 1982, working in a clinical setting during college.
- Classroom setting for 3 years.
- Graduate school at UCLA for M.A., & Ph.D., supervised Lovaas Clinic
- Co-Founder of Project PACE, Inc. in 1992
- Parent of NT children in 1996 and 1998
- Co-Founder of PACE Place in 2004

Eric Hamblen

- My road of discovery:
- 1985 met my first child with Autism
- Schools, camp, UCLA (Lovaas)
- Stephen, own business
- Own children, typical development
- Family Systems Model
- RDI, PACE Place, continue best practices with emphasis on the unique relationships within families and quality of life for all members.
- Family Immersion Model

3 Pillars of Relationship Development

- Developmental requirement for a child to effectively organize social information:
 - Attending
 - Referencing
 - Coordinating
- Core Deficits in ASD

Attending

- Look to the adult to soothe distress.
- Look to the adult to amplify joy.
- Habituated at 6 months of life.
 - Reflexive not conscious
 - Processed in the cerebellum not the pre-frontal cortex
 - Function: regulate emotional stimuli, prediction, orientation in space

Referencing

- Check with the adult when uncertain.
- Seek confirmation, approval, follow-up information.
- Read non-verbal cues.
- Habituated in the first year of life.
- Unconscious reflexive process.

Coordinating (Physical Coordination)

- Physical and emotional.
- Experience life together.
- Learn by observing.
- Unconscious reflexive process.
- Habituated in the first 18 months of life.

Self-Regulate Vs. Co-Regulate

- Deficits in sensory regulation
 - Poor ability to Co-Regulate
 - Maladaptive ways to Self-Regulate

Regulation

- Not Clingy, Not Disengaged...Connected
- Not Over-Aroused, Not Under-Aroused...At Ease
- Not Too Hard, Not Too Easy...Just Right
- Not Over-Stimulated, Not Under-Stimulated...Alert
- Not Anxious, Not Oblivious...Aware

Regulation

- Brain's TOP priority is regulation.
 - Brain is regulated.
 - Brain is seeking regulation.

Attending, Referencing, & Coordinating

- In Typical Development
 - They are learned reflexively.
 - We do not teach these consciously.
 - Remains unconscious & experiential.
 - Focus is on the experience and the environment.
 - Recognize and honor the non-verbal aspects of these behaviors.

Attending, Referencing, & Coordinating

- In the child with ASD
 - Deficits in attending, referencing, & coordinating.
 - Therapeutic approaches must follow developmental sequences.
 - Taught Consciously vs. Learned Reflexively

The Story of Skylar

- Neurological make-up and developmental patterns.
- Family system
- The “Ah Ha” Day
- Evolving the Idea
- Evaluating Skylar’s response

The First Eight Children

- Increased social awareness.
- Developmentally appropriate responses to stimuli in the environment.
- No protests.
- Attending, Referencing, & Coordinating
 - Rate
 - Reflexive/Unconscious

Response From Professionals

- Parents
- Psychologists
- Speech Therapists
- Occupational Therapists
- Family Therapists
- Developmental Pediatricians
- Neurologists

Dr. F. Owen Black

- The Vestibular System
 - The ConnectorRx stabilizing the vestibular system
 - Connecting to the body's core gravity point
 - Allows child to free processing for more sophisticated learning

Using The ConnectorRx

- Connecting with Parents.
- Wearing the ConnectorRx.
- Adult should interact with the environment in a natural way.
- No expectation that the child perform.
- Parent remains open to the child's initiations and attempts to engage the environment.
- Parent narrates.
- Parent shares observations and explores.

Using the ConnectorRx

- Parent should try not to directly teach while connected.
- Parent should minimize asking questions.
- Parent should use in any setting that feels comfortable.

Tantrums and the ConnectorRx

- Confusion And/Or Anger
 - Loss of control
- Tantrums typically short lived
- Powerful to have parent connected
- Hold the environment safe
 - Powerful experience for parent and child
- Children commonly request to be connected within the first week.

Pilot Research

- The families in the pilot research were taught the following Do's and Don'ts while using the ConnectorRx

Do

- Use ConnectorRx in a manner that facilitates reflexive learning, observational learning.

Do

- Allow the child to take the lead up to 50% of the time.
- Adult takes the lead up to 100% of the time.
- Use the ConnectorRx to share emotions and experiences.
- Use during low-key, daily events as well as dynamic, high-energy activities.
- Practice stopping and starting together without teaching it. Look at a plant, tree, or bird. Have a reason to stop. Try not to be arbitrary.

Do

- Be responsive to the child's non-verbal responses and initiations (gaze shifts, tugs on the ConnectorRx).
- Build non-verbal initiative capacity.
- If it feels like you want to be talking more, you should talk more. Use narrative language rather than ask questions.
- Forget you are wearing it.

Don't

- Don't use the ConnectorRx in a manner that inhibits reflexive learning.

Don't

- Do Not allow the child to use the Connector with anyone other than Mom or Dad.
- Do Not use it to control or steer the child.
- Do Not think of it as a safety device.
- Do Not use it as a language enhancement device.
- Do Not fill the interaction with too much language.

Don't

- Do Not use it to force the child to take risks.
- Do Not feel like you need to be creative when you are using it.
- Do Not expect your child to take as many conversational turns as you do.

Where to use the ConnectorRx

- Take a walk, during non-child focused interactions, zoo, Home Depot, preparing to leave the house, grocery shopping, washing the car, preparing meals, setting the table, chores, reading, feeding the dog, brushing your teeth, working in the yard, taking out the trash, playing a game with your spouse, sitting in a coffee shop, library, loading the car for a family trip, cleaning the house.

Pilot Research Project

- Who is participating.
- How we are gathering preliminary data.

Results of Pilot Research

- Preliminary Findings

Impact of Research Findings

- ConnectorRx may simulate the emotional connection that binds children to their caregivers early in life and leaves them available to subtle shared experiences that mold their style of interacting.
- The ConnectorRx creates a physical bond that holds individuals close enough so that subtle interactional dynamics can be processed in an automatic manner.
- Reflexive

Goal of The ConnectorRx

- Habituate Core Deficits of ASD.
 - Attending, Referencing, and Coordinating
- Help the child learn the function of attending, referencing, and coordinating.
- Empower children and parents to discover their shared relationship power.
- Restore balance in the parent-child relationship.

PACE Place

- Family Immersion Week
 - www.paceplace.org
- Kathi Calouri, Ph.D.
 - 503.356.8334, extension 2#
 - kcalouri@paceplace.org
- Eric Hamblen
 - 503.356.8334, extension 3#
 - ehamblen@paceplace.org