

Common Early Intervention Techniques for Children with Autism

These techniques and program are typically used in Early Intervention Programs for children with autism. Many of them are also commonly used with children and adults with autism who are also nonverbal (e.g. TEACCH and PECS).

Applied Behavior Analysis

Is a scientific approach to understanding behavior and behavior change. ABA therapeutic techniques are based on this science and are directed at improving a specific behavior. Many ABA techniques have been specifically developed to improve the social and communication behaviors of children with autism. Two common ones are listed below.

Discrete Trial Therapy

Developed by Ivar Lovaas, PhD at the University of California, Los Angeles

Resource: Book: *Behavioral Intervention for Young Children With Autism: A Manual for Parents and Professionals* by Catherine Maurice, Gina Green, and Stephen C. Luce (May 1996)

One-to-one ABA therapy, the therapist presents a task to the child and, based on the child's response the therapist will provide a consequence. The consequence is specifically chosen to increase the likelihood that the child will respond correctly when the task is introduced again. The original task or similar tasks are repeated until the child consistently responds correctly. Usually a trained therapist administers the treatment.

Pivotal Response Training (PRT)

Developed by Robert L. Koegel at University of California, Santa Barbara and Laura Schreibman, PhD at the University of California, San Diego

Resources: <http://kady.education.ucsb.edu/autism/>
<http://psy3.ucsd.edu/~autism/prtraining.html>

The goal is to teach the child pivotal behaviors (e.g. responding to cues, motivation and self initiation), using ABA principles. These pivotal behaviors can then be used in everyday activities to learn new skills. Parents and others are trained to administer the treatment.

Treatment and Education for Autistic and related Communication-handicapped Children (TEACCH) Program

Developed by Eric Schopler, PhD and colleagues at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine
Resource: www.teacch.com

This program includes assessment, classroom-instruction, home-based instruction, and adult services. TEACCH programs uses Structured Teaching, a set of teaching/support tools specifically designed for persons with autism. One of the Structured Teaching principles is the use of visual supports. TEACCH also incorporates ABA techniques.

Developmental, Individual-difference, Relationship-based (DIR) approach

Developed by Stanley Greenspan, MD.
Resource: www.floor-time.org

Another common name for this approach is floortime. This approach focuses on improving the child's reciprocal social interactions through play with the parents and others (teacher, occupational therapist and speech and language therapists).

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

Developed by Andrew Bondy, Ph.D., and Lori Frost, MS, CCC/SLP
Resource: www.pecs.com/index.php

PECS is an alternative form of communication using pictures, so that nonverbal children with autism can communicate their needs and wants. It is commonly taught to the child by a speech and language therapist and then integrated into the classroom and home. Some young children with autism start using verbal language after being taught PECS; others continue to use PECS as their primary form of communication.