Learning Objectives

• Participants will gain a brief presentation on the various neurodevelopmental disorders as identified in the DSM 5.
• Participants will learn how to structure play therapy sessions to address the unique needs of children with neurodevelopmental disorders.
• Participants will learn about special considerations when implementing play therapy approaches with children with neurodevelopmental disorders.
• Participants will learn several play therapy interventions to use with children with neurodevelopmental disorders.

Neurodevelopmental Disorders

• A disorder of brain function that can affect many areas of functioning including emotion, social, learning ability, self-control, and memory. ND’s may unfold and become more present as the individual grows. The term is sometimes associated with a wide variety of disorders and used interchangeable with developmental disorders and disabilities.
Neurodevelopmental Disorders

• Autism Spectrum Disorder
• ADHD
• Tourette syndrome
• Social Pragmatic Communication Disorder
• Intellectual Developmental Disorder
• Learning Disorders

- Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (2013)

A Spectrum of Presentation

More severe/more impairment (lower functioning)

Less severe/less impairment (higher functioning)

Common Features and Symptoms

• Dysregulation struggles (meltdowns).
• Sensory challenges.
• Poor social skills.
• Communication struggles.
• Poor emotional modulation.
• Lack of meaningful connection skills.
• Typically high levels of anxiety.
• School and learning challenges.
Common Features and Symptoms

• Trouble with verbal instruction (receptive language ability).
• Inability to predict or control various states of reaction.
• Often misunderstood and mislabeled.
• Susceptible to being bullied.
• Various levels of IQ.
• Often present with Atypical play.

Play Therapy

• The Association for Play Therapy defines play therapy as "the systematic use of a theoretical model to establish an interpersonal process wherein trained play therapists use the therapeutic powers of play to help clients prevent or resolve psychosocial difficulties and achieve optimal growth and development”
• Based upon a number of psychological theories
• Training (RPT, RPT-S)
• Association for Play Therapy  www.a4pt.org

Play Therapy Approaches for Neurodevelopmental Disorders

• Filial Play Therapy
• Child Centered Play Therapy
• Cognitive Behavioral Play Therapy
• THERAPLAY®
• AutPlay® Therapy
• Family Play Therapy
• Prescriptive Play Therapy
Why a Play Therapy Approach?

Play Room/Session Considerations
- Organization of play room
- Sensory issues in the play room
- Specific toys and games
- Routine and consistency
- Preparing the child for change
- Preparing yourself for behavior

Designing Play Based Interventions for Neurodevelopmental Disorders
- Play is a natural language for children.
- Focus on child’s developmental level.
- Metaphor and Symbolic Play.
- Materials (toys, art supplies, etc.).
- Play Therapy Rooms.
- Parent Involvement.
- Atypical vs Typical Play.
Designing Play Based Interventions for Neurodevelopmental Disorders

- Does the practitioner have an understanding of the neurodevelopmental disorder?
- Has the practitioner addressed relationship development and rapport?
- Is the practitioner prepared to be flexible and adaptable?
- Is the technique structured or directive?
- Is the technique concrete, not a metaphor?

Designing Play Based Interventions for Neurodevelopmental Disorders

- Does the technique address treatment goals?
- Can the technique be adjusted from simple to complex?
- Is the technique low prop based?
- Does the technique have minimal instructions?
- Can the technique be taught to parents and sent home as a home intervention?
- Can the practitioner participate with and assist the child if necessary?

What Are We Targeting?

- Emotional Modulation
- Regulation
- Anxiety/Sensory Processing
- Social Skills/Functioning
- Relationship Development
- Focus/Concentration
- Behavior Change
Assessment Strategies (Targeting Skill Development)
• Social Skills and Social Functioning Inventories
• Emotional Regulation/Modulation Inventories
• Play Skills Assessment
• Person Attachment/Connection Inventories
• Developmental Level Assessment
• Sensory Processing Evaluation
• A variety of inventories, parent reports, and observations

AutPlay Model for Parent & Family Training (Involvement)
• Parents are taught how to implement play based interventions at home between sessions.
• The practitioner should have an established parent training time and follow up to discuss any home intervention issues.
• Other family members can also be involved – siblings, grandparents, others.
• Parents should become co-change agents.

Limit Setting Models
• Child Centered Play Therapy (ACT)
  ▫ (A) Acknowledge what the child wants.
  ▫ (B) Communicate the limit in a non-punitive manner.
  ▫ (C) Target acceptable alternatives.
Limit Setting Models
• AutPlay Therapy Three R’s
  ▫ Redirect
  ▫ Replace
  ▫ Remove

Social Skills Interventions
• Bubble Tag – AutPlay Social Skills Groups...
  Robert Jason Grant
• Action Identification – AutPlay Therapy for Children...
  Robert Jason Grant

Relationship Development Interventions
• Sculpture – Play Based Interventions for Autism...
  Robert Jason Grant
• Turn Around and Make a Face - Play Based Interventions for Autism...
  Robert Jason Grant
Sensory Processing Interventions

- Body Bubble Target – Play Based Interventions for Autism... Robert Jason Grant
- Play Doh Brain – Play Based Interventions for ADHD... Robert Jason Grant

Emotional Modulation Interventions

- Feelings Face Off – AutPlay Social Skills Groups... Robert Jason Grant
- Me and My Feelings – AutPlay Therapy for Children... Robert Jason Grant

Regulation and Anxiety Reduction Interventions

- 10 Cloud Relaxation – Play Based Interventions for ADHD... Robert Jason Grant
- Punching Bag Moves - Play Based Interventions for ADHD... Robert Jason Grant
Focus and Concentration Interventions

• Patty Cake Categories – Play Based Interventions for ADHD... Robert Jason Grant
• Changing Objects – Play Based Interventions for ADHD... Robert Jason Grant

References and Resources

• AutPlay Therapy for Children and Adolescents on the Autism Spectrum - Robert Jason Grant
• Play Based Interventions for Autism Spectrum Disorder and other Developmental Disabilities by Robert Jason Grant
• Play Therapy and Aspergers Syndrome by Kevin Hull

References and Resources

• Play-Based Interventions for Children and Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders by Loretta Gallo-Lopez & Lawrence Rubin.
• 101 Games and Activities for Children with Autism, Asperger’s, and Sensory Processing Disorders by Tara Delaney.
• Creative Interventions for Troubled Children and Youth by Liana Lowenstein.
Thank You!

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AutPlay® Therapy
www.autplaytherapy.com