

Communication and Autism Spectrum Disorder

Jim Mancini MS, CCC-SLP

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Disclosures

- Jim Mancini has no financial relationships relevant to this presentation to disclose.
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Objectives

1. Identify components of communication.
2. Identify common disorder of communication.
3. Understand characteristics of communication commonly observed in ASD.

Some Definitions

Speech: Motor movements necessary for speech sound production

Language: Symbolic representation – vocabulary and grammar

Communication: Use of language and nonverbal skills in social interactions (Pragmatics; Social Communication)

Domains of Communication

Language

- Receptive
- Expressive

Speech

- Articulation
- Oral Motor skills

Fluency

- Stuttering

Voice

Social Communication (Pragmatics)

- Nonverbal
- Social Use of Language

Nonverbal Communication

Gestures (e.g. pointing, waving, shrugging, descriptive gestures)

Eye Contact (e.g. social referencing)

Facial Expression (to communicate emotional state, expression and interpreting)

Physical Proximity, body language

Social Communication: Communicative Functions

- Requesting (actions and objects)
- Protesting
- Commenting
- Greeting/Taking Leave
- Calling
- Showing Off
- Acknowledgement
- Requesting permission
- Requesting information
- Clarification
- Advocacy

Social Communication: Conversations

- A *reciprocal* conversation involves:
 - Attending to others
 - Accessing personal knowledge (through experience)
 - Responding to the questions or comments of others
 - Relating personal stories
 - Asking *relevant* questions
 - Staying on topic
 - Turn taking
 - Modifying conversation based on partner
 - “Reading” intentions/nonverbals
 - Executive Functioning Requirements



Speech Disorders in ASD

- Articulation Issues
- Apraxia of Speech – may be a contributing factor to nonverbal or limited verbal children.
- Treatment
 - Motor planning and lots of imitation/practice.
 - Consider an alternative/augmentative communication supports (Picture Exchange Communication System; Picture-based apps, sign language).

Language Disorders in ASD

- Expressive Language Delay
- Receptive Language Delay
- Mixed Receptive/Expressive Language Delay
 - Link to language-based learning disabilities.
- Treatment – traditional speech and language therapy with a focus on vocabulary building, grammar and link to social communication.

Social Communication Disorders in ASD

- Social communication deficits or differences can be seen in children with ASD and...
 - ADHD
 - Anxiety
 - Sensory Processing difficulties
 - Learning Disabilities
 - And more...
- Treatment- can be targeted in individual treatment and also via social skills groups.

Echolalia

- Repetitive Speech Patterns - Differences in tone, rate, rhythm, and/or volume of speech (e.g., monotone, sing song rhythm, fast or slow rate, consistently too loud or quiet).
- Echolalia
 - Literal repetition of others' speech either immediately (***immediate echolalia***) or later (***delayed echolalia***).
 - May serve a variety of communicative functions, and, not unlike imitation for typically developing children, it may be a productive language learning strategy for many children with autism (atypical development).

Stereotyped Use of Words/Phrases

- Stereotyped Use of Words or Phrases (“scripting”)
 - Words/phrases that seem “overused”
 - Can be from books/movies or a previous emotional event
 - Can include pronoun errors (referring to self in second person)
 - Can include using the same intonation each time a phrase is spoken
 - Overly formal language
 - Idiosyncratic use of language
- Repetitively Asking Questions
 - To increase predictability during conversations
 - As a way of social initiation

Alternative/Augmentative Communication

- Can include “low tech” or “high tech”.
- Capitalize on visual processing strengths.
- Often recommended for non-verbal/limited verbal children.
- Need to possess skills such as ability to discriminate pictures.
- SLP’s will often specialize in AAC (in schools and hospital-based) – can make a referral to Seattle Children’s Speech and Language Services.

Communication & Disruptive Behavior

- What role does an individual's communication abilities/difficulties play with regards to disruptive behavior?
- What communication skills do we teach to replace disruptive behaviors?

Disruptive Behavior – 2 Sets of Goals

Goals when child is NOT engaging in disruptive behavior:

- Increasing vocabulary and grammar.
- Increasing use of non-verbal communication.
- Increasing social communication.

Goals when child IS engaging in disruptive behavior:

- Teach functional communication based on results of a functional behavioral assessment.
- Teach scripts that can be utilized when child is frustrated (e.g. “ I need a break”).

SLP or ABA





Questions

THANK YOU!

Contact information: james.mancini@seattlechildrens.org