Developmental Approaches

Uncomfortable, Taboo, and Awkward Situations

Threshold Community Program
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Introduction

- Who are we and what we do
- Overview
  - Taboo and uncomfortable topics
  - Developmental approach
  - Family communication
  - Questions and Discussion
Established 2005
Located in Decatur, GA
Staff Overview
DIR/Floortime Approach
Core Values
Who Do We Serve?

- People who identify on the autism spectrum
- People who may have been labeled
  - Sensory Processing Disorder
  - Specific Learning Disabilities
  - ADHD
  - Anxiety and/or Depression
  - OCD or Tourette’s Syndrome
  - Down Syndrome
- People who present with a range of mood and behavior issues that have made it difficult for them to find success
Who Do We Serve?

- Puberty
- New kinds of relationships
- Independence and Autonomy

- sensory and processing differences
- compulsive or repetitive behaviors, hyper-focus
- communication,
- impulse control
- mental health concerns
- rigid thinking patterns
The Uncomfortable, Taboo, and Awkward

- Toileting difficulties
- Hygiene
- Adolescent and Young Adulthood Sexuality
- Bullying, Hate Speech
- Religion and Politics
- Drugs and Alcohol
Can you give me some examples?

- A student or client begins to masterbate in a public place
- A student or client states that women are not as smart as men
- A student or client reveals to you that they are gay
- A student or client has spread fecal matter in the bathroom
- A student or client has a strong body odor
- A student or client states that they’ll hit any Democrats in the building
What is not a developmental response?

- Negative verbal or physical reprimands, negative reinforcement
- Extinction methods or restraint
- Violate student or client or family privacy
- Shame or single out student or client or family
Safety, Respect, Empathy, Education

- **Safety**
  - Situation assessment
  - Prioritize needs and basic functioning
  - Follow professional ethical guidelines
  - Eliminate medical causes

- **Respect and Empathy**
  - Avoid shaming, embarrassment
  - Use strength based language
  - Maintain trust and positive connection

- **Education**
  - Cover age and developmentally appropriate topics
  - Clear, explicit, and emotionally meaningful
  - Curiosity before limit setting
  - Explain social norms and possible outcomes
Safety

- Situation assessment
  - Danger to self or other
  - Reality based thinking
- Prioritize immediate needs and basic functioning
- Follow professional ethics guidelines
Video: Safety
Respect and Empathy

- Avoid shaming, embarrassment
- Use strength based language
- Maintain trust and positive connection
Video: Respect and Empathy

SC: Oh, thank goodness. Joyous.
Education

- Cover age and developmentally appropriate topics
- Clear, explicit, and emotionally meaningful
- Curiosity before limit setting
- Explain social norms and possible outcomes
Video: Education

expain boundaries, social norms and likely outcomes
More Strategies

- Roleplay, Social Stories, Storyboarding, Journaling, Art
- Visual Guides, Picture Scenario Cards
- Peer Feedback
- Video Modeling
- Group or Individual Therapy, Floortime, CBT
- Repetition, Previewing, Reviewing
Uncomfortable and Awkward Family Situations

- A parent discloses they have never talked to their teenage child about sex
- You have to tell a family their clothes are “too small” for their student
- Student get into a fight that includes “hate speech” language and physical aggression
- Parents strongly disagree on treatment plans for their child in front of you and the child
- A student has defecated in their pants and needs new clothes
- A parent asks you to keep something secret from their significant other or child
- A parent brings in christmas cupcakes in your sugar free classroom
Why is this uncomfortable?

- Lack of education or training for professionals
- Fear of shaming or embarrassing family and student
- Fear of reaction from family
- Not an “expert” on the child, family, or situation at hand
- Myths and generalizations and stereotypes of race, ethnicity, culture
- Personal values, morals, norms, and beliefs
Addressing the Issues: Family Communication

- **Safety**
  - Situation assessment
  - Prioritize needs and basic functioning
  - Follow professional ethical guidelines

- **Respect and empathy**
  - Non-judgement and positive regard
  - Supporting of an individualized system

- **Communication**
  - Collaborative and strength based
  - Accessible and frequent communication

- **Education**
  - Providing relevant and factual information when necessary
Safety

● Situation assessment
  ○ Danger to self or other

● Prioritize immediate needs and basic functioning
  ○ Follow professional ethics guidelines
     ■ Mandated reporter
  ○ Utilize crisis resources
     ■ Crisis or suicide hotline
     ■ Emergency services
  ○ Community resources
Respect and Empathy

- Approaching the family
  - Non-judgemental perspective and positive regard
- Curiosity, warmth, and empathy
  - Reduces and avoids blaming and shaming
  - Space to feel heard and validated
- Meeting the family where they are
  - Individualized support of the family system
  - Accessibility to engage and connect
  - Collaboration
Audio Clip: Family Interview

Respect and Empathy

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1CA-jYzg_ek3OVKAMsi5c9_YINJHYFuu

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1RfwFT5oaTbbViHmlD9-6nkv2wp679xUl
Communication

● Collaborative information gathering
  ○ Utilizing a team approach

● Strength based language
  ○ Professional and transparent

● Accessibility
  ○ Can a family understand what I am communicating?
  ○ Does the family feel like it is a collaboration

● Frequency
  ○ Consistent communication
  ○ In person
Video Clip: Communication
Education

- **Educating the family**
  - Provide families with concrete, factual information
  - Provide opportunities to learn interventions or techniques
  - Provide appropriate resources and referrals

- **Growth oriented mindset**
  - Professional should stay open and curious
  - Flexibility in understanding
    - The family dynamic
    - The situation
Strategies and Summary

- Invest in a relationship
- Full picture: good and bad
- Communication liaisons
- Family Sessions
- In person meetings and team meetings

- Safety
- Respect and Empathy
  - Providing a space for the family
- Communication
  - Collaboration
  - Painting the whole picture
- Education and Growth Orientation
Resources

Education:
S.E.X. the all you need to know sexuality guide, H. Corinna
Taking Care of Myself M. Wrobel
Navigating the Social World J. McAfee
Sex is a Funny Word C. Silverberg, F. Smyth

Websites:
https://www.flexiblemindtherapy.com/resources.html
https://asdsexed.org/
https://www.disabled-world.com/disability/sexuality/
http://www.sexualityanddisability.org/
Questions?