Skills training and strengthening in daily activities

Aim: individual test training, adapt the skills learned to the program in a natural environment; strengthening of learned skills.

DTT (discrete trial teaching) - Discrete test training, otherwise, the training of individual testing.

The basic principle is to divide the difficult task into parts and train each time to make only a small particle, while at the same time making the task more ==difficult.==
Repeating a task, initially with help, gradually reducing the amount of help the child learns. Later we go to the next step.

Instruction – child's reaction – stimulation.

<u>Understanding the Instruction.</u> Instruction must be clear, simple, brief and loud, so that the child could get the attention to the instructions. In the beginning, the instruction should be a command and sound louder than the daily language, later it is said to be a natural volume. The instruction is not repeated.

<u>Repeat the action – reaction</u>. If the child does not act, we provide physical, visual or verbal assistance. We will give prompts according to the instructions and should be terminated as soon as possible. It is needed to avoid talking – peeking into the thing. After each repetition, take 1-3 seconds pause, but not too long for the child to lose his attention. Incorrectly done - "wrong". The instruction is repeated. Avoid strict "NO".

<u>Stimulation.</u> The child is immediately rewarded with the right answer or the right action, encouraged by favorite food, toy or activity (little ones), older children in tokens, social encouragement "good", " well done ", "you are doing well".

This training is based on promotion (motivation) and award (reward).

In order for the child to acquire the skills and could continue to apply it independently in a similar way, without your intervention, the help is gradually reduced (in accordance with the ABA rules).

Use the right way to train your skills. Most children (but not all) can acquire appropriate skills **faster if visual illustrations are used**. For example, if we want a child to understand the instruction, we can immediately imagine a picture/card corresponding to it (the simplest picture, a picture from the Internet, a painted picture - what's appropriate for a particular child). For example, if we want to teach a child to wash their hands thoroughly, we can show the visual sequence of cards/pictures in the hand washing, or even hang the cards to the correct sequence of the washbasin so that the child can look at them and remember the sequence of actions, that is, they do not feel the stress of washing their hands when they do not know what they need to do.

Assistance (and reduction) sequence:

Step 1: Verbal instructions (tidy up) = Visual assistance (if the child does not understand the particular verbal instructions or if you want to form a daily habit rather than being trained to respond to the verbal instructions) (the " tidy up " card) + Physical assistance „hand-by-hand" (take the child's hand and place things with his hand). After completing the instruction several times in a row and after showing the visual assistance and starting physical help (by directing the child's hands towards the objects scratched), the child completes the work himself (toys are placed on their own), the assistance is reduced to the second stage.

Step 2: Verbal instructions (tidy up) = Visual assistance (the " tidy up card). Note: If the child understands verbal instruction (there is no need to teach the meaning of the verbal instruction due to the linguistic perception lag) - the second step is skipped and goes straight to the third.

Step 3: Verbal instructions = self-instruction. In those cases, when you want to develop your own skills, for example, the child learns to tidy up independently when completing his work, without a separate assistance, the strategy is somewhat different. In this case, verbal instructions and visual assistance are used first. When the child learns the meaning of the card (Visual Assistance), the verbal instruction is removed. In order to form a skill, the visual assistance is reduced. The help is reduced by short displaying of the card until the child finally picks up the toys without the card after playing. Verbal instructions are not needed in this particular case, because our goal is not to teach a child to respond to the instruction: **"Arrange"**, but to teach him that he has to pick up the toys after playing, no matter anyone gives instructions or not.

It is very important to reduce the motivation slightly so that the child does not complete the tasks for reward!!!!!!! When the child is already familiar with the task, motivation is not required for every answer / task or the instruction, you need to motivate every second, then 3, 4, etc. Best of all, when the child is ready, go to the token economy.

New skills training

> ➢ Only one new skill starts teaching
> ➢ There is no need to introduce a lot of changes into the training process

STRATEGIES   (choose one of the strategies and then make additional changes)

- Using many examples.
- Training in different environments.
- Using various signals.

Teaching methods:

„**NO-NO-SHOW**"
> ➢ Instruction- child's reaction-praise/ "No"
> ➢ The instruction is repeated for the third time with help

Not suitable when a child is afraid to go wrong, when the child does not understand what is required of him.
The general principle is that if the child answers incorrectly three times in a row, he is given full assistance, which is gradually reduced when a child understands the task

Errorless learning
> ➢ The child is given one option without choice
> ➢ Repeat with small changes
> ➢ Add something which distracting - the first one, then two
> ➢ It is used in tasks when we act with visual means when it is need to understand the differences.

Not suitable when it does not use memory and works automatically, when we are training large, small and verbal motor skills.

Delayed assistance
> ➢ Give instructions and assistance together and reward.
> ➢ We repeat the instruction and help after 2sec., after 3 seconds up to 5 seconds when we are training new thing.
>   *Not suitable* when the child is not interested, just waiting for help. If the child's attention is very short (for example, the teacher asks for a red color, and he shows a green one) - the teacher must react neutral and calmly ask to think and show, in this case, the red color again. The assistance is given immediately after the re-instruction (the teacher removes all other colours,

leaving only the red one), the child touches the remaining card, then the teacher is neutrally pleased (you show correctly, it is red).

Subsequently, this task is again included in the tasks list, but the assistance is gradually reduced, as long as the child can independently carry out a new instruction (show a red color), then the new skill is fixed (red objects, pictures, toys, etc.).

- Skills training are done by dividing them into small steps. Each step is training separately, and then they are combined.
- Speak clearly and purposefully during the conversation with child.
- Each task has verbal instruction, which usually consists of 2-3 words, for example; "do it", "find the same", and so on. When a child is working, you can not distract him so that he can concentrate, comment on the purpose.
- If the child does not respond to the instruction, it is necessary to tell him it once again and give the help (hand-to-hand) and to encourage the performance, then reduce the assistance.
- Tasks are simplified so that the child is able to do it - increases motivation.
- Provide physical, verbal, visual, gesture assistance. It is necessary to provide help if the task or the ability to develop is new. This assistance is gradually reduced by repeating the task. Initially when a child is training in a new task /skill, it must be a motivation for each task's performed, even if it is done with help. Encourage task performance, not behavior. Therefore, the bad behavior (if it is) is ignored - the task is completed - the award is given.
- Always complete the task positively, give a reward, cheering. Try to increase the child's success, and to minimize failures.
- Tasks and actions are constantly repeated.
- It should be interesting and fun for the child to work, therefore, more difficult tasks keep changing to light, already learned with new ones.
- Give your help with a new task; reduce your assistance every time you repeat the task.
- The child learns or the actions/tasks are fixed when the actions or tasks are repeated.
- Emotionally praise, reward for success, but if the task was carried out with help, then praise more calmly and if the task was done incorrectly, say "no", "wrong".
- Reward child for new, more complex tasks a lot, and fewer for lighter tasks. Give reward also for obedience, good behavior.
- Repeat the new ability many times until the child is well absorbed and understand it's essence. Then you'll connect a new step to the completed step.
- Do not be tired - train differently - the same task repeat at most 2-3 times in a row during the session. This will keep child's attention and motivation.

Use of assistance/prompt. 5 most common mistakes:

Use of assistance/prompt in the teaching method, it makes the autistic child's learning process more effective. The assistance is used to teach a child any skills from articulation to toilet skills. Using the help is a special methodology, as in any other training, correctly applying it, helps the child to perform the required task/perform the necessary actions and, at the same time, does not depend on others. Taking into account the specificities of autistic children - lack of understanding of linguistic stimulus, difficulties in accumulating, low motivation to learn, lack of cooperation, etc. - help is sometimes the only way to move learning from the "death point". However, despite the fact that many parents and therapists understand the meaning and necessity of the help, they often have difficulties when using it in practice.

1. **The first and most widespread mistake of using help – no adaptation.** In other words, the therapist does not use help at all because he is convinced that he either uses the help (nobody else sees it) or the help is already/no needed. The main indicator of the fact that the therapist does not use the help is the child's screams, hysteria and unwanted behavior during the lessons and it's happening constantly. This usually looks like this:

The therapist gives the child an instruction (for example, find the same thing).
The child (depending on his autistic peculiarities) does not respond or responds incorrectly
The therapist repeats the instructions.
The child does not respond.
The therapist repeats the instruction again (usually a tone up).
The child does not respond or does something else.
The therapist repeats the instructions again - and this can last forever.
The time is tending, the child becomes more and more distracted and eventually does not understand anything (becomes a child whose "it is impossible to teach anything").

2.   No timely use of assistance.

The therapist gives the child an instruction (find the same thing).
The child responds incorrectly
After the child has responded incorrectly or still "during the process" (when the child stretches his hand to the wrong answer) the therapist directed his hand in the right direction. This is repeated several times - the child reacts incorrectly, the therapist corrects, the child reacts incorrectly - the therapist corrects ... After a while the therapist notices that the child did not learn the correct answer and there is the same "The child can't teach anything".

3. Too fast cancellation/removal of assistance. The methodology provides for a gradual reduction of help. For example, reducing the assistance from the strongest/highest to the weakest/the lowest has the following steps, such as full or full assistance, partial help (3/4), partial help (2/4), partial help (1/4), cancellation/ removal of assistance .

A therapist can use full/comprehensive help and do not use it at all in the next training block. The child, of course, will not perform the task again. The therapist uses full help again, while in the next training, they do not use any. Etc. The final result is "the child can't learn anything".

4. The fourth error, in essence, meets the first error. But here the therapist thinks he uses the help without actually using it, but using "Behavioral moment" effect. It looks like this:

The therapist gives the child an instruction (for example, find the same thing).
The child does not respond.
The therapist repeats the instructions.
The child does not respond.
The therapist gives instructions "Do it" and shows simple imitative action (eg., to applaud).
The child performs imitative action (applaud). The therapist gladly commends him and gives him another imitative instruction.
The child is doing it.
The therapist praises the child again and returns to the initial instructions - "find the same thing."
The child reacts correctly.

In this case, the child becomes dependent on the imitation instructions in order to move on to another type of instruction. The child will perform tasks only in such a case, if he applaud several times and raise his hands up. If the child does not receive these instructions - they will not perform other tasks.
Here you will not name a child "impossible to train", but 90 percent, he will devote his time for applause and raising his hands.

5. The assistance is used constantly.

Therapist uses help, but does not take any steps to reduce it. In this case, the child carries out all the tasks with assistance only and does not perform them independently. A therapist's help can be direct and visible (hand - hand when the therapist takes the task out of the child's hand correctly) or continuous use of the gestures in giving instructions (show the correct answer with a finger). Also, the therapist's help

may be indirect, that is, he may not understand that he tells the correct answer for the child, for example, whenever you ask for a thing to be displayed - looking at him or putting his hand on him, always giving the correct answer always on the first left, above the other, and so on. Autistic children often have excellent memory and the ability to see and learn the kind of assistance that can help to orient for them in carrying out their task.

So, in order to increase the effectiveness of learning, and also to prevent unwanted child's behavior during learning and increase his motivation to learn, it is necessary not only to remember the correct ways of using the help, but also to apply it in practice. Need to use of help! Even if the child performed the task himself yesterday, but today the task seems "impracticable" or it is difficult for him – assistance should be provided, gradually reduced, from the learning block to the block and fixed an independent response.

Help is used before reaction, not after it! **If the child is wrong - the wrong action is corrected and in the another learning step, until the child is responding incorrectly/choose an incorrect answer - it is necessary to provide him the assistance, gradually reduce it, and move from the learning unit to the strengthening of skills and self responses.**
There are several methods of using the assistance and then **reducing it:**

- From the lowest to the highest
- From the highest to the smallest
- Temporary stop of help/advice
- Gradually physical diversion (hand-to-hand)

All these methods need to be known and used freely in practice. There are no children whose can't learn anything! If the child is learning poorly or slowly – the wrong learning method is selected or the learning objectives are not set correctly or inappropriate assistance and persuasive prevent to fix the information.

Sources:
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