

Intervention Case Study 15

This study looked at using parents to teach an autistic boy to use pictures to communicate in the home.

Introduction

Jose is a 4 and a half year old boy who has a diagnosis of autism and lives at home with his parents. Jose can perform some simple tasks and is toilet trained but needs help with getting dressed and taking a bath. He can make sounds, but does not speak, and mainly uses nonverbal behavior to communicate.

Measurement

Researchers observed Jose in the home, specifically his bedroom the kitchen, and the dining room. They had parents play with Jose and watched how he communicated. Researchers had 15 minute interactions taped two to three times a week.

Intervention

Parents usually have the most interaction with a child, and it is important to try to improve communication between a parent and an autistic child. The goal of the intervention was to have Jose's parents teach Jose to use picture cards to communicate and for the cards to become part of the daily routine in the home. Each card had a photograph of common objects, activities, people, and places. The parents taught Jose to use the card and faded their prompting over time, until he used the card spontaneously. Prompts included pointing to the card and asking for the card. The parents gave the child opportunities to use the cards, such as putting away desired objects Jose would have to request them and giving Jose small meals so he would have to ask for more. The parents also made sure the cards were visible and in the room with Jose.

Results

After the intervention, Jose spontaneously used the cards to communicate an average of 13% of the time. In a surprise follow-up session, Jose spontaneously used the cards 10% of the time. The cards were used during the daily morning, breakfast, dinner, and bedtime routines. Jose's mother perceived his communication skills as increasing from very poor to moderate as a result of the intervention. The study showed that parents can teach their autistic child to use picture cards to communicate and that the cards can become part of the child's daily routines.

Stiebel, D. (1998). Promoting augmentative communication during daily routines: A problem solving intervention. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 1*, 159-169.