Cracking Some of the Mysteries with Clients on the Autism Spectrum

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Disclosures
- I have NO relevant financial relationship(s) to disclose.
- I have relevant nonfinancial relationship(s) to disclose.
- Serve on ASHA SIG 11 Coordinating Committee Member

Learning Objectives
1. Identify & Review terms associated with repetitive language behaviors in autism & communication
2. Identify & Review terms associated with burnout and regression autism & communication
3. Confer vital information regarding key elements needed for the discussed of reduction/reshaping strategies for successful implementation for functional and meaningful communicational skills.
4. Compare and discuss various signs and symptoms to help individuals with Autism who struggle with Autistic Burnout to reach successful implementation for functional and meaningful communicational skills.

Questions?
1. Who here went through their Graduate program in the 1990’s or earlier?
2. Who had a client on the AS as a graduate student?
3. Did your client display echolalia/echolalic behaviors?
4. What did your supervisor teach you to do about this/these behavior(s)?

Definitions
A communication disorder is an impairment in the ability to receive, send, process, and comprehend concepts or verbal, nonverbal and graphic symbol systems.
- May be evident in the processes of hearing, language, and/or speech
- May range in severity from mild to profound
- It may be developmental or acquired
- Individuals may demonstrate one or any combination of communication disorders
- May result in a primary disability or it may be secondary to other disabilities

ASHA
Definitions

**Communication** is the use of nonverbal (eye gaze, facial expression, body posture, gestures) and verbal (speech or spoken language) behavior to share ideas, exchange information, and regulate interactions.

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Echolalia

Echolalia is the repetition of words, phrases, intonation, or sounds of the speech of others. Children with ASD often display echolalia in the process of learning to talk.

- Echolalia is sometimes referred to as movie talk, scripted speech, idiosyncratic speech, or repetitive speech because the child will remember and repeat chunks of previously heard information.
- Echolalia was once thought to be non-functional, but is now understood to often serve a communicative or regulatory purpose for the child.
- Immediate echolalia is the exact repetition of someone else’s speech, immediately after the child hears it.
- Delayed echolalia may occur several minutes, hours, days, or even weeks or years after the original speech was heard.

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Idiosyncratic language

Idiosyncratic language refers to language with private meanings or meaning that only makes sense to those familiar with the situation where the phrase originated.

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Perseverative speech

Perseverative speech refers to repeating the same phrase or word over and over or bringing up the same topic repeatedly with a sense of “getting stuck” when it is no longer appropriate. Children with ASD who learn to talk usually have repetitive use of language.

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Examples

**Echolalia**

https://youtu.be/ome-95iHtB0

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Spectrum of Broad Treatments

- ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis)
- TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children)
- DIR (The Developmental Individual Difference, Relationship-Based Model of Intervention)
- SCERTS (Social Communication, Emotional Regulation, Transactional Support)
There are many other well thought out “plans of action”

But do any of these address what to do when a client’s chief method of communication is echolalia?

Therapy Approaches
Echolalia is sometimes referred to as movie talk, scripted speech, idiosyncratic speech, and repetitive speech because the child will remember and repeat chunks of previously heard information

So let’s change the Script!

LANGUAGE IDEAS

Traditional Language Development
- We build on labeling nouns (bottom-up learning)
- Core vocabulary of 100 labels
- Add actions/descriptors to labels
- Child naturally learns to add properties such as prosody
- Naturally learns perspective such as mine vs yours

Not Traditional Language Development
- Gestalt language-processing style (top-down learning)
- Uses negative behaviors to avoid communication
- Eavesdrops on odd speech patterns
- Does not take the perspective of others

Perspective Speak Definition
Most easily defined as language that is spoken from the perspective of the speaker
- Develops in neurotypical children
- Marked by perspective specific words Me, I, Mine
- You, Your, Yours
- His, Hers, Her, Him, He, She

Perspective Speak
A therapy approach used to teach children to understand and use perspective-specific vocabulary appropriately and eventually independently
- First teaches vocabulary as a reference to self: “I” (director & responder)
- Teaches possession: mine/mymy vs. your(s): (director & responder)
- Differences: His, Hers, Her, Him, He, She
- “you/you” becomes a reference to the communicative partner: “my/mine remains” a reference to child
- You/your switches (specific vocabulary is assigned to different reference points)
Perspective Speak
Great idea!
But who has an assistant who can be the responder?
What do I do to teach this idea?
• I have an in-service with all adults in the client’s life to teach my version of perspective speak.
• I recruit other members of my group therapy session to be a responder

Learning to Change the Script
So let’s practice for a minute
(or several)
Come on now, I know you want to!

Perspective Speak
If there is one impression about this technique that I hope you leave with is that it all really comes down to this:
You have to put it “IN”
the way you want it to come “OUT”!

Autistic Burnout
Definition of NT BURNOUT
1: The cessation of operation usually of a jet or rocket engine
2: Exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation usually as a result of prolonged stress or frustration
2b: A person suffering from burnout

Management of BURNOUT
Stop working
Find a release
Take a break from alcohol & caffeine
Ask for less responsibilities
Have a heart-to-heart with someone
Make work more fun
Work away from your desk
Use FMLA if necessary
Get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well
QUIT YOUR JOB

What is Autistic Burnout?
Autistic Burnout is an accumulation of years of trying to appear normal and cope as a Neurotypical (NT). The Strain and drain of it suddenly becomes too much and a person with Autism falls apart.

All autistic symptoms get worse
What is Regression?

Neurotypical:
Regression is a psychological defense mechanism in which a person abandons age-appropriate coping strategies in favor of earlier, more childlike patterns of behavior. This regression is a form of retreat, bringing back a time when the person feels safe and taken care of.

Autism Spectrum:
There is no universally agreed definition; however, all definitions support that regression involves the loss of a previously attained skill, such as language. ➢ Language regression refers to the loss of verbalizations. ➢ Language/social regression indicates other social behavior involved in addition to the language.

Temper Tantrum vs. Autistic Meltdown

Temper Tantrum
➢ Temper tantrums are unpleasant and disruptive behaviors or emotional outbursts. ➢ They often occur in response to unmet needs or desires. ➢ Tantrums are most likely to occur in younger children or others who cannot express their needs or control their emotions when they are frustrated.

Autistic Meltdown
➢ Many autistic people may show signs of distress before having a meltdown, which is sometimes referred to as the “rumble stage.” ➢ They may start to exhibit signs of anxiety such as pacing, seek reassurance through repetitive questioning or physical signs such as rocking or becoming very still.

The Signs & Symptoms

ASK AN AUTISTIC

Fitting in... Autistic Burnout

What is it?
1. Lack of social skills learned in a classroom will not work outside of the classroom.
2. Underestimate how hard it is to be someone you are not neurologically meant to be.
3. Many adults with ASD social skills are the only way to access and form integrations in society.
4. Underestimate the importance of “fitting in.”
5. People with autism are social and need to be seen as such.

NEVER:
1. Assume social skills learned in a classroom will work outside of the classroom.
2. Underestimate how hard it is to be someone you are not neurologically meant to be.
3. Many adults with ASD social skills are the only way to access and form integrations in society.
4. Underestimate the importance of “fitting in.”
5. People with autism are social and need to be seen as such.

Now That’s Over

No ASD book or tip professional references Autistic Burnout. Only ASD adults talk about it. Please treat this as a real and serious threat until it can be disproven as a threat.
References

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