EXPLORING BARRIERS & SOLUTIONS TO RECREATION PARTICIPATION

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SESSION
OBJECTIVES:

• Understand the benefits of recreation & leisure engagement for individuals diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

• Understand the barriers to leisure engagement for individuals with ASD

• Explore strategies for overcoming barriers
If bread is the first necessity of life, recreation is a close second.
- Edward Bellamy
BENEFITS OF RECREATION PARTICIPATION

• Decrease stress / Increased quality of life
• Increased social relationships and acceptance
• Reduction in inappropriate and self-stimulatory behaviors
• Increased physical/emotional wellbeing
INCREASED QUALITY OF LIFE

• The most influential factors on Family Quality of Life were whether the child with ASD had a major health concern, whether family’s needs were met by disability related services, and whether there were opportunities to engage in leisure and recreation activities.

  • How satisfied are you with your family’s leisure and recreation?
    • 9.9% Very satisfied, 41.1% satisfied, Neutral 28.5%
  • To what degree is your child with ASD involved in your family leisure and recreation activities?
    • 49% always, 37.7% Quite a bit, 31.8% some, 10.6% a little
  • How important are recreation & leisure to your family quality of life?
    • 49% rated this very important, 37% quite important, 10% somewhat important

INCREASED QUALITY OF LIFE


- Based on 9 studies
- Increase in physical activity = Decrease in stereotyped and repetitive behaviors (9 studies)
- Better outcomes associate with more vigorous activity (jogging vs walking)
- Improved social & emotional functioning (2 studies)
SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS & ACCEPTANCE

• “Leisure and recreation activities serve as the primary means by which people come into contact with one another and form relationships” (Godbey, 1999; Howard & Young, 2002)

• “Offers significant opportunities to practice and develop social skills through activities” (Baker, 2000; Garcia-Villamisar & Datillo, 2011)

• “Provides a way to meet others and form friendships around mutual interests and shared activities” (Datillo, Benedek-Wood, & Mcleod, 2010)

• “Improves community members’ level of awareness and appreciation of capabilities of participants with ASD” (Devine, 2004)

UNFORTUNATELY...

- Children, adolescents, and adults with ASD participate in fewer social and community recreational activities than individuals without ASD (Buttimer & Tierney, 2005; Ormond, Krauss, & Seltzer, 2004; Solish, Perry, & Minnes, 2009)
BARRIERS: EXTRINSIC

- Lack of information (unaware of various options)
- Transportation difficulties
- Scheduling conflicts
- No one to do things with
- Poor quality services

Levine et al. 2004
BARRIERS: INTRINSIC

• Limited Social Skills
• Social Demands
• Low Independence
• Adherence to Routine
• Limited Leisure Skills/Restricted Interests
• Responses to Sensory Experiences
SOCIAL DEMANDS OF THE ACTIVITY

1. Understand the demands for social interaction
2. Select activities that have clear rules governing interaction
3. Find a version of the activity that has less social demands
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Activity</strong></th>
<th><strong>Description</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Find activities that have repetitive actions to motivate engagement during</td>
<td>engagement during unstructured times</td>
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<tr>
<td>Structured classes or activities with specific routines</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incorporating the interests of the individual into the activity</td>
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RESPONSES TO SENSORY EXPERIENCES

• Understand any sensory sensitivities

• Provide activities that contain preferred sensory stimulation

• Cause and effect activities (provide immediate engagement)
Characteristics of individuals with ASD may be strengths for leisure participation:

- Restricted interests
- Using visual information meaningfully
- Strong visual-spatial ability
- Long attention span for activities of interest
- Concrete & literal
- Memorization skills
- Attention to details
INTRODUCING NEW ACTIVITIES

Does it contain features important to the individual?
# Translating Preferences to Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concrete, clear rules</td>
<td>Checkers, chess</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong visual spatial ability</td>
<td>Puzzles, Lego's</td>
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</table>
# Translating Preferences to Activities

## Features
- Highly organized, structured
- Regularly scheduled
- Active/limited waiting

## Activity
- Zumba class/Line Dancing
- Yoga class
- Swim Team practice
- Hiking, Cross country skiing
Golf Preferences

- Outdoors
- Limited Social Interaction
- Walking
- Repetition
- Clear Beginning and Ending
How do we facilitate successful Recreation Participation?

• Interest
• Find the right program
• Ask the right questions
• Identify and provide the right supports
DISCOVERING LEISURE INTERESTS

• Questionnaire
• Pictures
• Direct observation
  • Attract to certain materials
  • Types of interactions with materials
  • Choice of activities
  • Social preference
CONSIDERING FEATURES OF AN ACTIVITY

• Clear rules
• Clear beginning and ending
• Physical activity required
• Social interaction required
• Repetitiveness
• Sensory feedback
• Amount of waiting required
ACTIVITIES THAT ARE SUSTAINABLE

• Enjoyed by same-aged peers/age appropriate
• Readily available in the community
• Can be done in a variety of environments
• Economically feasible
• Are of interest to friends and families
• Potential as a lifelong leisure pursuit
• Can be engaged in alone or with others

IS THIS ACTIVITY, RIGHT?

- Is the activity of interest? YES
- Is this an inclusive or segregated setting?
- Is staff trained and knowledgeable about ASD?
- Is there an atmosphere of support and acceptance?
- Cooperative or competitive activities?
- Is the environment appropriate and/or can it be modified?
WHAT ARE YOUR NEEDS AS A PARENT?

• Can some of your needs be met through your child's activities?
• Are there activities that can allow all members of the family to participate but at their own level?
  • Example: Ski Lodge (Different levels of difficulty, tubing, indoor activities)
Questions to ask prior to visiting or signing up!

• Prior experience working with participants with ASD
• Philosophy of the program
• Number of participants
• Staff ratio
• Strategies that are used/have been used
• Accommodations/staff training
• Behavior problems
• Others??
STRATEGIES FOR INTRODUCING NEW ACTIVITIES

Through Visual Supports:
Outline of what will occur (Given in advance)
• What am I expected to do?
• What will happen?
• What the activity entails from start to finish?
• How will I know when I am finished?
• What will I do next?

EXPLORING THE ENVIRONMENT

• Being aware of factors that may lower a participant’s ability to function
  • Structure/consistency
  • Procedure
  • Environmental stimuli

• Determine accommodations/or modifications needed
  • Quiet space
  • Access to fidget
  • Preparing for change/transitions
  • Visual information
  • Timeline for completing the activity
UNDERSTANDING SUPPORTS NEEDED

- Visual
- Environmental
- Routines
- Expectations
- Sensory Supports
- Preferences
- Communication/Social Skills
- Behavioral Challenges
Supporting and Guiding Participation in Recreation

- Provide Feedback
- Highlight Natural Cues
- Provide Visual Sequencing & Support
- Provide Literal & Clear Directions
- Reduce Stressors
- Respect Personal Space

Qualities That Make Leisure Materials and Activities More Successful

- Challenging without being over-stimulating
- Suitable for the person’s ability level
- Limited demands for complex social interaction
- Opportunity for a sense of control or mastery
- Provide opportunities for ongoing practice

RELATED SKILLS FOR INDEPENDENCE

• Transportation
• Making purchases
• Preparing for the activity (What to bring/wear)
• Keeping track of time
• Awareness of free time
• Initiation
• Problem solving
**IN CONCLUSION**

- Create a balanced leisure lifestyle
- Foster and use natural supports
- Make needs known!
QUESTIONS??
REFERENCES


• Coyne, P., & Fullerton, A. (2014). *Supporting individuals with autism spectrum disorder in recreation.* Urbana, IL; Sagamore


REFERENCES


