

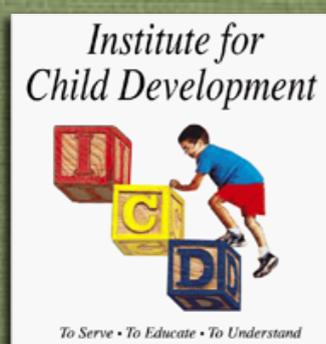


# Autism Initiative Training Series

## Module 3: Chapter 3.1

### How Individuals with Autism Learn & Adapt

<http://bddso.icd.binghamton.edu>



# Learning Objectives

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- Name 2 of the 4 elements in Evidence-Based Treatments (EBT).
- Name 3 criteria used to evaluate treatments.
- Identify the importance of EBT for adolescents and adults with autism.
- Identify why assessment of skills is important.
- Define indirect and direct observation.
- Define operational definition.

# Evidence-Based Treatments

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- Treatment- a process of change.
- Also called EBTs or “empirically-supported treatments”.
- Treatments that have been determined as effective based on research evidence that supports their use.

# Common Elements of EBTs

(<http://www.mentalhealthclinic.org/html/evidence-based.htm>)

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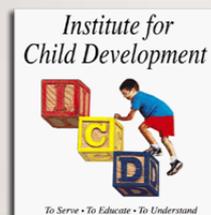
- A structured approach to treatment in which key elements are clearly defined.
- Treatment is well-defined, organized, & can be replicated easily.
- Targeted population for treatment is clearly defined.
- Methods are updated to reflect changes in scientific knowledge & outcomes are clearly defined and evaluated.



# Treatment

(Freeman, 1997)

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- Strategies and Methods
  - Outcome
  - Quality of Life and Maintenance



# Importance of EBT

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- Specific evidence for effectiveness.
- Awareness of the advantages and disadvantages of a treatment before using it.
- Specific methods to be used in treatment settings.
- Sense of mastery for both the instructor or staff member and the individual or learner.

# Assessing Current Skills

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- To understand which skills will be beneficial to teach, it is important to collect information and conduct assessments to:
  - Determine which skills an individual currently has.
  - Identify the typical skill level of other individuals of the same age.
  - Target skills that the individual actually needs in order to increase their quality of life.

# How to Assess Skill Level

(Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007)

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- Assessments should collect data on single behaviors that make up a more complex skill.
- Data collection methods:
  - **Indirect observations** rely on the reported observation, either by the individual or other people (i.e. interviews, checklists, etc.)
  - **Direct observations** are the direct and repeated observations of the individual's behavior in the natural environment (i.e. real-time observations, functional assessments, etc.)

# Direct Observations

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- When starting data collection, all behaviors involved in the targeted skill must be operationally defined.
- **Operational definitions** are definitions that describe a behavior in objective, measurable terms.

## Example of Operational Definition

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- A classroom teacher believes there are too many verbal interruptions during instruction time. He wants to take data on how many interruptions occur, so he creates an operational definition.
- The “verbal interruptions” can be operationally defined as:
  - *“Any vocalization by a student during the instructional period without first raising his or her hand for attention from the instructor.”*

# Taking Data

(Cooper et al., 2007)

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- There are five distinct dimensions of behavior on which this data can be taken on.
  - Frequency
  - Duration
  - Latency
  - Topography
  - Magnitude

## Taking Data Continued

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- Depending on which skill is being assessed, service providers can take data on the appropriate dimensions of the behavior.
- In many cases, data needs to be taken across multiple dimensions of the behavior.

## Example of Data Collection

- The teacher who is interested in reducing interruptions starts to take data on the problem behavior.
- He decides to take data on both frequency (how many interruptions) as well as the duration (how long the interruptions last).



## Taking Data on Peer's Use of the Skill

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- Data on skill use in peers can help the instructor determine whether instruction on a certain skill is needed compared to the performance of same age peers.
- If the skill is determined to be necessary, the level of peer skill use can serve as a standard for how other individuals should perform.

## What Skills Should be Taught?

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- An additional consideration is whether activities can improve the quality of life for the individual.
- This includes physical and emotional well-being, interpersonal relationships, social inclusion, personal growth, material well being, self-determination, and individual rights (Schalock, 2002).