

Tuesday, 3:00 – 4:30, C2

Tornadoes, Hurricanes, Volcanoes, and Earthquakes: The Impact of Emotional Dysregulation in ASD

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Objectives:

Identify advances in clinical assessment and management of selected healthcare issues related to persons with developmental disabilities

Notes:

Tornados, Hurricanes, Volcanoes, & Earthquakes

The impact of emotion dysregulation in Autism Spectrum Disorders

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Developmental Enhancement Behavioral Health



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Welcome!

- Developmental Enhancement
 - Psychologists, Clinical Social Workers, Board Certified Behavior Analysts, Behavior Techs
 - Partnered with Occupational Therapists and Speech Language Therapists
- Professional Experience
 - Psychiatric Inpatient
 - Residential Settings
 - Day Treatment/Alternative Education
 - Outpatient



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Autism Spectrum Disorders

- Lifelong brain-based developmental disorder
- Impacts many, if not all life domains
- 1 in 68 children (1 in 42 for males, 1 in 189 for females) are diagnosed with Autism (CDC 2016)
- Characterized by differences in communication, social reciprocity, and atypical (stereotyped or repetitive) behaviors



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ASD and brain-based differences

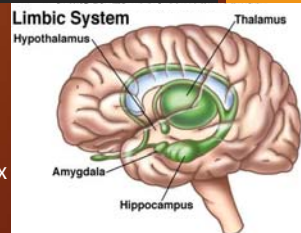
- Increased amount of gray matter, larger brains
- Accelerated gray matter development (2-4 years) -> impact on white matter?
- Regions do not communicate as fluidly, less connected
- Lack of synchrony between regions
- More areas working simultaneously
- Limbic System
 - More neurons, increased density, smaller size (Bauman & Kemper, Neurobiology of Autism)



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Limbic System and Emotion Regulation

- Amygdala
 - Emotions, Aggression
 - Sensory processing
- Hippocampus
 - Learning and memory
- Frontal lobe/Prefrontal Cortex
 - Executive functioning
 - Self-regulation



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Brain-Based Foundations for Emotion Regulation

- Regulation dependent on dynamic relationship between arousal (sympathetic) and inhibitory (parasympathetic) systems
- Amygdala, Hypothalamus, Pituitary, Prefrontal Cortex all implicated in this process


(Thompson & Goodman, 2010)



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Dysregulation


- Behavioral, Emotional, Cognitive
 - Are they really distinct?
 - All characterized by
 - Over-reactivity, Unpredictability, Instability
- Illustrations
 - A great rollercoaster
 - A broken thermostat
 - Michigan weather



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Emotion: Collection of Experiences


- Neurological
 - Electrical activity, neurotransmitters, blood flow, etc.
- Physiological
 - Pulse, blood pressure, muscle tension, sweating, digestion
- Cognitive
 - Appraising, labeling, interpreting, predicting
- Sensory
 - Processing of and sensitivity to various types of stimuli



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Emotional Dysregulation: Definitions


<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heightened intensity of emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The inability to engage in goal-directed behaviors when experiencing distress.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poorer understanding of emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of awareness, understanding, and acceptance of emotions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater negativity to emotional experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An unwillingness to experience emotional distress as part of pursuing desired goals.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less ability to self soothe after negative emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of access to adaptive strategies for modulating the intensity and/or duration of emotional responses.



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Other Vulnerabilities Associated with ASD


- Social Cognition
 - Perspective-Taking and Thinking about others (thoughts, feelings)
 - Understanding impact of me on others
 - Expected vs. Unexpected behaviors
 - Reciprocity
- Restricted and Repetitive Behaviors
 - Interests, Activities, Motor Behaviors, Speech



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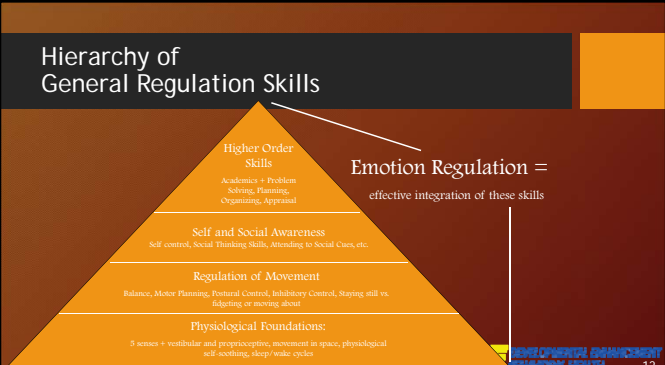
Other Vulnerabilities Associated with ASD

- Executive Functioning
 - Higher order cognitive functions
 - Planning, Organizing, Processing
 - Problem solving & Cognitive Flexibility
 - Inhibition
 - Regulation of attention and focus
- Sensory Processing
 - Seeking and Avoiding
 - Highly implicated in regulation




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Hierarchy of General Regulation Skills



Emotion Regulation = effective integration of these skills



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Development of Regulation Abilities

- Reliance on others → • Self Regulation
- External/Behavioral → • Internal, Private
- Concrete, Specific → • Flexible, Multiple, Broad
- Avoidance-based → • Approach-based
- Short term → • Long term (goal directed)

Approaches: Mindfulness

- Mindfulness
 - Paying attention, on purpose, in the moment
 - Mindfulness vs. Meditation
 - Observe (watch, listen, pay attention)
 - Participate (taste, touch, smell, do)
 - Describe (putting words to experience)
- MBSR, ACT, DBT, etc.
- Foundational Breathing and Attentional-Control Skills

Approaches: Mindfulness

- The Filter
- Flashlight Focus
- Change the Channel

Approaches: Physiological Targets

- Activity-based psychotherapy (using the arousal & satiation/satisfaction continuum)
 - Directly teaching and practicing regulating physiological activity in session
- Sensory Processing/Sensory Regulation approaches and activities

Approaches: Emotion Skills

- Coping and Emotion Regulation Skills
- Avoidance-Based vs. Approach-Based
- Function/Purpose of Emotions
- ABC's of Calming
 - Activities, Breathing, Communicating

Approaches: Behavioral Skills

- Superpower of Self Control
- Physical Outlets for Emotional Energy
- Self Management in Multiple Settings

Approaches: Interpersonal

- Attachment/DIR philosophies of co-regulation to teach self-regulation
- Social/Interpersonal Skills (e.g. Social Thinking)
- Thinking about self and others

Approaches: Interpersonal Problem-Solving

- R: Respect
- E: Explain
- D: Describe
- O: Options

In a nutshell ...

We're aiming to alter the course and trajectory of development, promoting positive mental health and regulatory abilities. These factors must be considered and accommodated, but the basic principles remain the same.

The End
Thank You!!!

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