

SOLUTIONS FOR AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDERS

By Terri Phillips, MFT

The data released by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) in 2009 reports that 1 in 110- 8 year old children in the United States have (ASD) Autistic Spectrum Disorders. The website AutismSpeaks.org reports this to be a 600 % increase in prevalence over the past 2 decades. These numbers are huge! Autistic Spectrum Disorders are defined in Wikipedia as “disorders that include Autism, Asperger Syndrome, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, Rett Syndrome and Pervasive Developmental Disorder not otherwise specified. These disorders are typically characterized by social deficits, communication difficulties, stereotyped or repetitive behaviors and interests, and/or cognitive delays”. Children diagnosed with these spectrum disorders can be very low functioning, high functioning or somewhere in between. If you are a parent who has had to hear your doctor tell you that your child is on this spectrum, you already know how devastating this news can be.

There are several theories as to why the ASD diagnosis is on the rise. Conventional medicine suggests that there are genetic factors that determine ASD and it is more widely and clearly diagnosed now causing the reported numbers to increase. Other theories suggest that environment toxins and even immunizations are to blame as an identified cause. Most children’s symptoms begin to appear in early childhood prior to school. Whatever the causal factors, it is important for families to have some resources and treatment options available to minimize the effects on the family system.

Each child diagnosed with ASD is unique and therefore a treatment plan needs to be developed that will address those needs. Many children have responded well to diet changes and nutritional supplements. Social skills interaction opportunities and groups are also effective forms of treatment. Some doctors and therapist specialize in the area of Autism and can be a tremendous resource to develop optimal treatment plans. There are many supportive websites that can guide parents in the right direction for treatment.

Autism Spectrum Disorders are clearly related to the brain and it’s functioning. Healing Young Brains (Hill/Castro, 2009) begins with a chapter devoted to Autism because it is so prevalent. The research outlined suggests that those on the spectrum have brain wave patterns that have difficulty organizing connections. Neurofeedback is a form of treatment that is extremely useful for children on the spectrum. Connecting the scalp with sensors which are then connected to a computer system allow “feedback” to assist the child in strengthening these connections that are not working properly. Training the brain to operate in a calm, alert, focused manner helps the child feel more successful and in control.

Since many on the spectrum have difficulties with repetitive behaviors and anxiety related issues, Neurofeedback is an opportunity to regulate the brain decreasing anxiety and helping to manage repetitive behaviors with brain flexibility. It is a non-invasive form of treatment and an integral part of any treatment plan to help the child and the entire family system function at a peak level. Recent research about neurofeedback as it relates to ASD and assistance in finding the right provider for you is available on EEGinfo.com.

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