



Company Newsletter

August 1, 2016

KEEPING YOU INFORMED

IN THIS ISSUE

Welcome to the Newsletter

by Romina Kiryakous, CEO

This is the beginning of a new chapter in communication for Genesis Behavior Center Inc. and FirstPath Autism: the new company newsletter!

Intended for both the ABA professionals and caregivers, this newsletter will keep you up to date with recent autism and education related news, new ventures of Genesis Behavior Center Inc., and tips for teaching people with autism.

Within these newsletters you can expect to find anything from business policy to success stories to fun tips to explanations of lesson plans.

By using this newsletter to communicate directly to both our employees and clients, we hope to breathe a refreshing openness into our approach.

You will also find attached fun activities for your children to benefit from as well.

Expect for the following issues to include even more information and fun stories, tips, and activities.



Learn about FirstPath Autism

A comprehensive introduction to FirstPath Autism, our new digital service for parents and professionals wishing to learn more about ABA therapy.

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Tips from FirstPath Autism

Read some helpful tips from FirstPath Autism's blog team about ABA Therapy and dealing with introducing a child to new foods.

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FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook: www.facebook.com/firstpathautism/

Twitter: @firstpathautism, @rkiryakous

Instagram: @firstpathautism

Fragile Learner Model

Amalie Holly, BCBA

A child can be considered **fragile** when there are certain events that are causing or contributing to that child feeling extraordinarily stressed, in turn leading to the child experiencing difficulty effectively managing his/her day (sometimes referred to as "Setting Events"; for the purpose of this model, these events will be labeled "Context Events"). **Context Events** can have happened further back in time but continue to affect the present and/or can be situations that children "bring with" them.

Positive Context Events can set the stage for success.

Adverse Context Events can negatively affect a child's ability to cope with educational programming, social relationships and behavioral management.

Examples of Context Events that can negatively impact children are:

- Physiological Variables
- Learning History Variables
- Emotional Variables
- Extraordinary Transition Variables

Typically, children feel helpless over Context Events because they have little-to-no control over them (and, frequently the adults involved don't either). An adult who has tried to get through a work day while suffering a migraine or after having received a less-than-favorable job evaluation that day has probably felt a sense of fragility similar to what a fragile child feels.



The following strategies need to be crafted specifically for the individual child in accord with the child's personal learning experience:

- **Structure:** Structure is increased for the fragile child.
- **Demands:** Demands are decreased whenever possible.
- **Reinforcement:** Levels of reinforcement for work and appropriate behaving should be increased.

The full Fragile Learner Model, as well as a video explanation, can be found on the [FirstPath Autism](#) site's video library.

IMPORTANT NOTE: One important consideration when implementing a Fragile Learning Model is to do so without the child "catching on" that it is being done based on the child's behavior -- in other words, we don't want the child to know that we are decreasing demands, increasing structure, and increasing reinforcement based on the child's behavior. We don't want a child with a legitimate stomachache one day who has his/her workload decreased because of the stomachache, to then fake a stomachache every day after to keep getting out of work.

Introducing: FirstPath Autism

by Romina Kiryakous, CEO



This logo is trademarked and is the property of FirstPath Autism and its parent company Genesis Behavior Center Inc.

What is FirstPath Autism?

FirstPath Autism provides access to online video lessons with Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)-trained professionals.

FirstPath was created with the idea in mind that ABA techniques should be shared with all parents and professionals. FirstPath Autism's program is based on the treatment approach that resulted in high success rates achieved by Genesis Behavior Center. The videos can be used in conjunction with other skills training and behavioral programs.

What does FirstPath offer?

FirstPath currently hosts 99 video lessons, covering both skills and behaviors. Each video lesson comes with a downloadable

step-by-step document that gives instructions on how to perform the behavioral therapy, what materials will be needed, what prerequisites should be met, how to respond to different answers or scenarios, and much more.

Also included are terminology glossaries, data sheets, target mastery sheets, video testimonials, and a FirstPath Autism blog full of helpful tips, success stories, and fun activities for families of people with autism.

FirstPath can be accessed with the following link:

www.firstpathautism.com

FUN TIPS FOR PARENTS

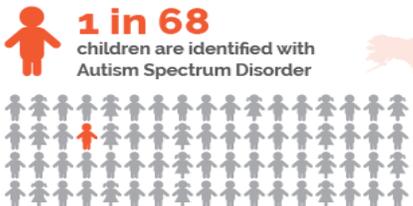
**Tip:**

To help with a hectic morning routine, have your child's clothing picked out and ready to go the night before.

**Tip:**

Label toy bins with pictures to help your child find a specific toy and to make clean up faster and easier!

STATISTICS



Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), reportedly occurs in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.

1 in 6

About 1 in 6 children in the United States had a developmental disability in 2006-2008.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Statistics taken from Centers for Disease Control

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html>



Child Confidentiality in Mind

by Linda Mikha, JD

Confidentiality is always important to keep in mind.

The following are some of our confidentiality policies that all employees should keep in mind:

All information pertaining to your client(s) is highly confidential. Do not discuss any information about your client, his/her age, school location, home location, parents, diagnosis, etc.

When with the client, **do not identify yourself as a Behavior Therapist/Behavior Consultant or employee of Genesis Behavior Center** to anyone not directly involved in the child's program.

No information should be given regarding other clients you may or may not be working with at the time. If a present client asks you if you are working with another client, your response should be kind and professional, but simply, **"Due to confidentiality requirements, I cannot discuss other clients that I am or am not working with."**

All relationships with parents, teachers, family members, etc. of the child should be **of a professional nature**. Babysitting, respite, and attending family functions or outings outside of program hours is prohibited while you are assigned to that child's case.

Conversations with parents/teachers should be **brief and focused on the child's current program**. Please refer all questions regarding future programming to the Behavior Consultant.

When you are working with a client in a school setting and the teacher or teacher's aide expresses any dissatisfaction with your client's parents, or vice versa, **never share these negative comments with the other party**. This promotes disunity and dissention within the team.

You should **never engage in any kind of gossip with the teachers, aides, or parents**. This kind of behavior is *unacceptable*, leads to unforeseeable problems, and disrupts the client's program. Your focus should only be on the client's **program and success**.

As much as possible, your specific qualifications should be kept between you and Genesis Behavior Center. **All Behavior Therapists/all employees are given the same training and meet the same basic qualifications**, therefore distinguishing between BTs or any other employee on the basis of specific qualifications which may or may not be preferred by a certain parent/teacher is discouraged.

Under no circumstances are Behavior Therapists/Consultants allowed to **text on cell phones during program hours**. **Your phone should be left in your car**, and all messages checked and calls made during breaks only.

Genesis prohibits any employee to **engage in any social media outlet with client, client's family, teachers, and relative**.

Always keep confidentiality in mind.

Autism and Food-Related Issues: Help for Picky Eaters

Some families may take peaceful, stress-free meals together for granted, but we're guessing that yours isn't one of them. If your child has autism, then it's likely you've dealt with drama surrounding food and mealtimes. We understand how challenging it can be to accommodate your child's food preferences while still providing a balanced, nutritious diet. To help your favorite picky eater expand his or her horizons, we suggest the following steps:

First, investigate possible medical issues.

Since a significant percentage of individuals with autism have food intolerances and allergies, they can feel physically ill when they eat certain foods. Yet since autism also involves communication difficulties, these individuals may not give voice to their felt experiences.

As such, completing medical check-ups and

relevant tests is important. If your child is a very picky eater, make an appointment to get him or her tested for gastrointestinal issues or common allergies.

Recognize the sensory components of eating and work to minimize discomfort.

Individuals with autism often experience the sensory aspects of eating more strongly than others. They might feel uncomfortable with the flavor or texture of a given food, but they might also struggle with sensory inputs surrounding the dining ritual itself.

Encourage initial tasting, not eating.

In *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh*, our favorite stuffed bear is about to accept a delicious pot of honey, but his friend Rabbit snatches it away. Pooh pleads, "But Rabbit, I wasn't going to eat it. I was just gonna taste it."

When coping with a picky eater, scenes such as this remind us to separate tasting from eating.

If tasting isn't happening, have your child try sniffing a new food, touching it, or helping you to stir or serve it. This way, you'll familiarize your child with the new food and make it more of a known entity.

Embrace the idea of going slow and making small wins.

This is where your Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) experience comes into play. By now, you understand that teaching your child a new skill involves breaking down the steps involved and practicing each component over and over again.

Take the long view

One of the most helpful decisions you can make when it comes to shifting your child's eating habits is to take the long view. Decide that his habits don't have to change all at once. Instead, begin laying the groundwork for them to change in the future.

Why ABA reinforcement at home makes a huge difference

by FirstPath Autism Team

As a parent, you have the power to encourage your child's growth ... so why not use it for good? Why not decide to engage in "a small daily task" to support your child's development?

Well, one reason why you might not choose to undertake an at-home ABA program is because you're not convinced that it can effect change.

Practice at home keeps new material current and prior learning fresh.

Engaging in ABA sessions at home helps to ensure that your child doesn't lose ground or forget lessons learned.

Regular practice is essential for skill-set maintenance. After all, we don't use every life skill we know every single day. Seasons change, routines shift, and once-familiar tasks fall by the wayside.

Practice facilitates the creation of new brain pathways.

ABA is a kind of neurological exercise program. When your child repeats exercises and receives rewards for a given set of behaviors, the result is the creation of new neural pathways.

This is especially important for children with autism, a neurodevelopmental disorder that impacts brain function.

ABA practice gives you an opportunity to take data and shape a positive behavior support plan.

Practicing ABA lessons at home gives you a valuable opportunity to collect both skill and behavioral data. When you share that data with your child's therapist, you aid in the creation of future lessons and behavioral support plans too.



ABA reinforcement can help you to be the best parent (and spouse, employer, and friend!) that you can be.

Continuing ABA work at home doesn't just benefit your child. It can impact your whole family, giving everyone the tools they need to succeed.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the FirstPath Autism website for more helpful blogs like this:

INFO.FIRSTPATHAUTISM.COM/BLOG



Theory of Mind

Regarding Situation-Based Emotions

Theory of mind is an area where many people with autism have deficits. One of ways to approach Theory of Mind is by teaching situation-based emotions.

Situation-based emotions teach how to identify and recognize how someone typically feels in common situations. This lesson can be taught with a touch (receptive) and speech/Sign Language/PECs (expressive) response.

Before beginning

The child needs to have mastered several basic lessons in the areas of communication, labeling, and identification of emotions in order to be successful with this lesson. The child must also demonstrate interest in other people and be able to attend to the faces of others. The child must also have mastered basic WH questions (What; How).

Why it's important:

This skill can assist the child to better understand why people behave the way they do in certain emotional scenarios and also to understand how his/her behaviors and actions can affect others.

Materials needed:

Sequencing cards/visual stories of specific scenarios and accompanying emotional responses; emotions flashcards.

Generalization activities:

Pretend play, reading/discussing books, watching/discussing TV or movies, asking questions ("Why is she sad?"), peer play activities.

Steps for preparation:

1. Sit facing the child, in a quiet place free of distractions.
2. Have several reinforcers and highly preferred items ready and available; make sure a reinforcer assessment has been completed so the child is motivated to earn and learn!
3. Have materials and data collection ready.

4. Have lesson materials prepared and available.

5. Make sure the child is ready to attend, ideally looking at teacher and not engaging in any other activities.

Teaching Steps:

Receptive: Touch/Physical Response

1. Present a visual scenario; for example: story pictures depicting Bobby eating an ice cream cone and then the ice cream cone falls on the sidewalk.
2. Present 3 mastered emotions cards (e.g., Happy; Sad; Bored).
3. Ask the child "Touch (or 'Give Me') how Bobby feels."
4. Wait 3-5 seconds for child to respond
5. Provide feedback on how the child responded:

Correct Response: enthusiastic praise and/or give the child his/her chosen reinforcer

Incorrect or No Response: corrective feedback, model or prompt of correct response
6. Record data.
7. Begin again at step 1.

Typical order of learning targets:

Receptive labeling of observed emotions according to specific scenarios

(Can be done via sequencing cards/visual stories and emotions cards: "Touch" or

"Give me" how 'name of person' feels")

- Happy
- Sad
- Mad/angry
- Scared
- Surprised
- Excited

2. Expressive labeling of observed emotions according to specific scenarios

3. Expressive labeling of child's own emotions according to specific scenarios (Can be done as above, but now ask "How would you feel?")

Learn more on the FirstPath site:

www.firstpathautism.com

THEORY OF MIND



Kyle Baker: A success story

Kyle is a shining example of how a person with autism can fully learn theory of mind and apply it to everyday life. Kyle has become part of the team at Genesis and FirstPath, writing Steps to Social Success stories to help people struggling with social concepts.



What is theory of mind?

Theory of Mind is ability to attribute mental states to oneself and others- to understand that other people have beliefs, principles, and perspectives different from one's own. Many social disorders can cause deficits in theory of mind, and such a concept may be daunting for parents and therapists alike. But, with the right knowledge and lesson plan, Theory of Mind can be treated through applied behavior analysis just like any other deficit.



Video lessons

Video tutorials on Situation-Based Emotions and other Theory of Mind related lessons can be found on the FirstPath Autism video library, along with lesson guides, data sheets, glossaries and more.

Employee of the Month

Genesis Behavior Center Inc. will be, starting with next month's newsletter, dedicating a page every month to an employee of the month.

Employee of the month will be decided based on:

- Promptness and professionalism
- Completing deadlines
- Having exceptional work ethic
- Upholding consistent communication
- Being a team player in meetings
- Personal understanding and positivity
- Protection of the company and clients
- Dedication to their cases

Employee of the month will receive a gift card and a dedication in the corresponding month's newsletter. Employee of the month status may also result in promotion.

Employee of the month will be a shining example of Genesis Behavior Center's ideal employee, and will be given a chance to give their thoughts and advice for other employees.



Company
Newsletter

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