10 EVIDENCE-BASED TIPS FOR COUNSELING ADULTS WITH AUTISM

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Rationale

• Importance of early recognition and accurate diagnosis
• Understanding the common comorbid conditions (CCCs)
• Choosing an effective approach, assessment and interventions
1. *Presume competence & capability*

Splintered skill sets
- Common strengths & limitations
- Procedural versus declarative knowledge

Personal power, agency and a voice
- Person-first language and approach

**Clinical interventions:**
- Rapport building: Assessing for strengths and interests
- Engaging through Socratic questioning

Bellini, 2008; Bilken & Burke, 2006
2. Understand the support system

Social support

- Family structure and dynamics
- Friends, partners, spouse

Clinical interventions:
Reciprocity in social support

Assist in identifying a “social coach”

Devoldre et al., 2010; Laugeson, 2013
3. *Increase optimism*

“Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional”

Caregiver pessimism is one of the strongest predictors of problems in adulthood; optimism promotes a person’s ability to:
- identify alternatives to past behaviors,
- increases problem-solving skills,
- decreases helplessness,
- increases coping skills, and
- promotes a positive worldview

**Clinical interventions:**
- Thoughts quiz
- Self-Talk Journal: tracking, disputation and reframing

*Durand, 2011*
4. Assess & plan for treatment

Treatment goals to address the core symptoms of ASD

The power of adult self-report & third-party reporting

**Clinical interventions:**
Social Responsiveness Scale 2
- Useful in distinguishing from common comorbid conditions
- Designed to help inform treatment outcomes & progress
- Five subscales: social awareness, social cognition, social communication, social motivation, and restricted interests and repetitive behaviors

Constantino, 2012; Constantino, et al., 2003
5. Treat social motivation

How interested are they in the social landscape?

Intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation

Clinical interventions:
Explore intrinsic & extrinsic social motivations and expectations

Identify common interests and build upon success as a way to foster social interactions or relationship(s)

Chevallier, et al., 2012
Navigating the social landscape starts with identification

Presentation can range from hyper to hypo sensitivities

**Clinical interventions:**
Utilize direct instruction with concrete rules to aid in identification

Provide opportunities for practice with visual cues (written, photographic or video) for real world application and generalization

6. *Treat social awareness*

Myles, Trautman, Schelvan, 2004
7. Treat social cognition

Interpreting and predicting the social landscape

Theory of mind (TOM)

Clinical interventions:
Examine social errors and successes through questioning:
   1. What was that like for the other person?
   2. What did that other person think about you?
   3. Does the person want to interact with you again?

Edelson, 2016; Senju et al., 2009
8. Treat social communication

Expressing oneself successfully in the social landscape

All social communication involves verbal and non-verbal elements

**Clinical interventions:**
Role-play to demonstrate errors & model effective strategies

Rehearsal in session for practice & corrective feedback

ASHA, 2016; Laugeson, 2013
9. Treat restricted interests & repetitive behaviors

Preoccupation with restricted patterns of interest, adherence to nonfunctional routines and unexpected motor mannerisms

**Clinical interventions:**
- Applied behavior analysis
- Identifying alternatives
  - Utilize current interests as a means to further develop and broaden skill set and interests

Kim & Lord, 2010
10. Promote independence

Gerhardt & Lanier, 2011; Baker, 2006
Select a region on the map to view contact information for a CARD site and resources near you.

**CARD sites**

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University of Florida at Gainesville
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University of Miami
University of South Florida

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American Speech Language Hearing Association.  www.asha.org


