



Christine Kendall and Gloria Staios (Speech Pathologist's) ***The parent role in therapy***

Christine:

One of the challenges of parenting and working with a child with autism is that they don't necessarily respond to our intuitive way of interaction. One of the things that you are often doing when you first start therapy with a child and their parents is actually incorporating them into the therapy so that you are helping them learn how to engage and interact with their child because it isn't intuitive and doesn't naturally happen. And so as a part of that whole process; we would look at teaching parents, we would be giving them things to do to include into their daily lives at home and teaching as we go along so that they are developing their skills along with their child.

Gloria:

Very much it is a real priority for us to be teaching the parent, we all are aware of how challenging any parent's role is, let alone a parent to a child with ASD. We realise that families are very busy and they have got lots of things to do, so for us we really need to consider the daily routines of the family, what we really aim to do with the families is look at the various routines that take place in their homes and how can we embed the skills that we are teaching the parent to use with the child into their daily routine so that it doesn't feel like it is an extra thing, that they have to find an extra 15 minutes here and 20 minutes there for. Instead, at meal times for example we would be talking to families about how they can implement choices for the child to make and communicate, rather than just giving them one thing and there is no communication involved. It could be, at bath times that there are things to choose such as a range of toys, and again making a choice. Then, once the child has made the choice, look at ways of playing in the bathtub with the toys and using language stimulation and language expansion, perhaps targeting very specific language goals that we have in that context.

We need to make sure that these things are being generalised in the child's daily life, helping the families embed it so that it doesn't feel like extra work for them. Then if there is time, there will be some specific teaching that we might also want to have the families do and that could be times in the week where perhaps other children might not be around and the mum might be at home with the child in question and perhaps snatching 10 minutes here, snatching 10 minutes there to do some of this additional teaching work and hopefully what that will do is if you add up all of this time within the week you will find that there are an awful lot of hours of naturalistic intervention as well as more direct intervention taking place in that child's life.

Christine:

It is important that therapists work this out with a parent so that it has actually been a collaborative effort between the two. What you are working on are things that the parents want to work on as well and it is actually going to make a difference at home with the lives of their children.

*** This is an approximate transcription only; minor modifications have been made to assist the reader.*