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DIR/Floortime

A practical tool for Occupational Therapy Practitioners

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Learning Outcomes

As a result of this course, participants will be able to:

1) Identify key behaviors that indicate specific Functional Emotional Developmental Capacities in children
2) List two behaviors associated with each Capacity 1-6
3) Describe three ways DIR/Floortime can be incorporated into OT sessions

Overview

- DIR Model
- Functional Emotional Developmental Capacities
- How to use DIR
- Floortime as an Intervention
- How to use Floortime
- Goal attainment
- Questions

What is the DIR Model?

- D stands for Developmental
- I stands for Individual Differences
- R stands for Relationship based

The DIR Model is a framework that helps clinicians, parents, and educators conduct an assessment and develop an intervention plan tailored to the child. It is typically used with children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and other developmental challenges.

What is Floortime?

Floortime is the specific technique to follow the child's natural emotional interests and challenge the child towards greater mastery of the social, emotional, and intellectual capacities.

Functional Emotional Developmental Capacities

- Functional: focused on the outcomes of multiple areas of development
- Emotional: the emotions are leading the entire team

Learning is from the bottom up> requires an integrated foundation before moving on to more complex levels of functioning

FEDC 1: Shared attention and Regulation

- Mastered by three months
- Self-regulation and shared attention
- Purposeful movements
  - Moving head towards voice/people
  - Rhythmic movements of the baby and caregiver

FEDC 1: Shared attention and Regulation

Sensory Affect Motor Pattern (SAM): Affect links sensation coming in with the coordinated motor pattern

- Pleasurable affect initiates turning towards and coordinated movements.
- Early affect connection is important for the first stage and promoting further development in emotions, cognition, language and social skills.

FEDC 1: Shared attention and Regulation

Core Deficit: lack of sustained, purposeful attention, dysregulated states, fleeting engagement (may include self-absorption)

FEDC 2: Engagement

- Emerging at 2-4 months, mastered by 5 months
- Warm smiles at caregivers
- Synchronous vocalizations and arm movements
- Broadening emotional range (protest, delight, curiosity)
- "Falling in love" with the human world
- Emerging attachment and relationships

FEDC 2: Engagement

Core Deficit: brief engagement, passive two way communication with more responding than taking initiative, may include aimless or avoidant behavior

FEDC 3: Reciprocity/Gestures

- Emerging 3-9 months and mastered by 9 months
- Learn cause and effect (a smile leads to a smile)
- Learns to comprehend and respond to others' emotional signals
- Identifies that their own state gets different reactions from caregivers (squeals, fusses, cries)

FEDC 3: Reciprocity/Gestures

Children need to learn social signals and how to read and respond to social cues

- Social skills cannot be mastered with memorized rules, even older children can learn to read and respond to social signals in an authentic way
- Emotional signaling helps the child meet their needs and begin self-regulation
- Self-regulation is the by-product of two way emotional signaling

FEDC 3: Reciprocity/Gestures

Core Deficit: lack of continuous flow of affective signaling and problem solving, may include repetitive or self stimulatory behaviors

FEDC 4: Problem solving

- Emerging at 9-18 months and mastery is present at 14-18 months.
- Toddler is learning a continuous flow of back and forth communication (Circle of communication)
  - Does the child close the circle?
  - Should see 50+ circles in a row.

FEDC 4: Problem solving

- Sense of self is forming through interactions with others and the environment.
- The child is learning the concepts that will form language that they have yet to learn. Words become short handed symbols for what the child knows.
- Learning to operate in terms of patterns not just isolated behaviors

FEDC 4: Problem solving

Difficulties in this stage include difficulty with self-regulation, forming symbolic use of language and scripted patterns of interactions.

Interventions at this stage help a child to develop symbols and meaningful language (not scripted)

FEDC 4: Problem solving

Core Deficit: Memory-based, rather than creative and reflective thinking, poor impulse control, peer, social judgement, and academic problems

FEDC 5: Symbolic

- Mastered by 24-30 months
- Using symbols in pretend play
- Meaningful use of language in play and other occupations
- Learns new words in a problem solving manner
- Full engagement with a communication partner, emotional investment

FEDC 6: Logical/Abstract ideas

- Mastered by 36-48 months
- Combining emotionally meaningful ideas together
- Thinking at the symbolic level
- Reasoning why they feel the way they do
- Connect ideas of the immediate past, present and future together

FEDC 7-9

First six stages build the foundation for more advanced stages

- 7 Multi-Causal Thinking
- 8 Comparative thinking (not just why, but how much)
- 9 Internal sense of self
  - Reflect on their feelings, compare how you feel vs. how you "should" feel
  - Form judgements and negotiate the tasks of adolescence and adulthood

Ways OTP's can use DIR

Use the FEDC to assess, form an intervention plan with parents and document progress of skill attainment.

Assess the child's FEDC

- Bring out the child's best level of function
- Child should interact with the caregivers for a long period of time while the clinician is observing and coaching.
- Look for Core Deficits at each FEDC

Interventions using Floortime

- Therapies are used as catalysts-the child needs hours and hours of intervention
- OTP's can work with the family to develop:
  - Home program includes spontaneous developmentally appropriate interactions
  - Semi-structured problem solving interactions
  - Motor, sensory, and visual spatial activities

Mastery of the FEDC

- A child can **fully master** a FEDC- the child is using all of their processing capacities at the stage of functional emotional development
- **Partial mastery** indicates that the child has the basic core, but is not using all of their processing capacities or constrictions are present
- **Deficit** indicates that the child has not reached that stage, unable to achieve the emotional themes and processing capacities

Techniques: Engage

Engage and let the child set the emotional tone: play partners can be animated using hand gestures and facial expressions to encourage a child choose an activity to do together. At the early levels, join the child in clapping, making noises or wandering around a room. Attempt to capture the child's rhythm, intensity, and interests.

Techniques: Circles

- Open and close circles of communication: build on his interest and overtures, inspire the child to build on what has been said or done.
- Circles can involve simple gestures, such as looking, smiling or pointing.

Techniques: Circles

The partner can retrieve a toy the child is pointing at and then ask “want it?” When the child responds by smiling and reaching, the child has closed another circle and extended the interaction.

Techniques: Playful Obstruction

- A partner can expand interactions by obstructing in a playful way. “Playing dumb”
- The partner can become a “walking, talking” obstacle that the child needs to climb over to reach her favorite toy or to simply continue wandering around the room.

Techniques: Emotional Range

Adding a plot twist that builds on the child’s interests can expand the child’s emotional range. Help the child explore closeness and dependency, assertiveness and cooperation, initiative and curiosity, aggression, anger, limit setting, pleasure and excitement. These will help the child develop a full range of emotions.

Techniques: Emotional Range

- If a child tends to be passive in asserting herself and claiming toys, the partner could playfully move her favorite toy away from the others, slowly and deliberately. The child may well assert herself and claim her toy.
- Acknowledgement of negative, angry feelings may help a child to reveal what he is feeling and introduce positive themes in his play.

Techniques: Emotional Range

Anger: if a child is demonstrating themes of anger or aggression the partner should not interfere or stop the flow by asking a verbal child questions, such as "Why is your toy so mad?" If the child is banging a doll, the partner will join in banging their own doll, but gradually slow the rhythm and comment, "Gee, he really wants to bang. I bet he has a good reason for that." This allows the partner to be emotionally engaged at the child's level.

Techniques: Processing

- Expanding processing capacities requires the child's systems to work together under the direction of a meaningful goal.
- If the child is moving a toy car, the partner could move a garage over the car. This requires new visual spatial reaction. Other activities include: building block towers and forts, obstacle courses, or hide and seek games that follow the child's lead or interests.

Goal Attainment

- Goal attainment can be measured through progressive mastery of functional emotional developmental capacities.
- Understanding the FEDC can assist the OTP in explaining the skills progression to the parents and other team members.

OT Goal Examples

- Johnny will turn towards caregivers speaking in his environment 2 out of 3 times within 5 seconds within six weeks.
- Sarah will express emotion by smiling or grinning when interacting with caregivers 3 out of 5 times per day, within six weeks.

OT Goal Examples

- Johnny will gesticulate with arms raised to indicate he wants to be picked up by a preferred caregiver 75% of the time, within six weeks.
- Sarah demonstrates matched language with caregiver during playtime for 15/20 minutes, within six weeks.

OT Goal Examples

- Johnny imitates a familiar action (such as hugging, feeding or changing) with a stuffed animal 2/3 play sessions without cueing, within six weeks.
- Sarah demonstrates play with superheros that includes a three step action sequence without adult cueing, within six weeks.

DIR/Floortime a Practical Tool

The DIR approach fits well with OT theory and supports seeing clients as individuals. DIR and OT recognize the role of parents/caregivers in making lasting change for children with developmental differences. Floortime is an effective technique to engage children where they are at and include caregivers as a support and advocate for their children in moving up the social/emotional developmental ladder.

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Questions?

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