

Autism: Behavioral training and management

Behavioral training teaches people of all ages who have autism how to communicate appropriately. This type of training can reduce behavior problems and improve adaptation skills.

Both behavioral training and behavioral management use positive reinforcement to improve behavior. They also use social skills training to improve communication. The specific program should be chosen according to the child's needs. High-functioning autistic children may be enrolled in mainstream classrooms and childcare facilities—watching the behavior of other normally developing children can provide examples for autistic children to follow. But other children are overstimulated in a regular classroom and work best in smaller, highly structured environments.

Consistent use of these behavioral interventions produces the best results. The child's functional abilities, behavior, and daily environment should be thoroughly assessed before behavioral training and management begins. Parents, other family members, teachers, and caregivers of the autistic child should all be trained in these techniques.

Many treatment approaches have been developed, including:

- **Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA).** This treatment is based on the theory that behavior rewarded is more likely to be repeated than behavior ignored. It focuses on giving the child short simple tasks that are rewarded when successfully completed. Children usually work for 30 to 40 hours a week one-on-one with a trained professional. Some practitioners feel this method is too emotionally draining and demanding for a child with autism. Yet, years of practice has shown that ABA techniques result in new skills and improved behaviors in some children with autism.
- **TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children).** This is a structured teaching approach based on the idea that the environment should be adapted to the child with autism, not the child to the environment. Teaching strategies are designed to improve communication, social, and coping skills. Like ABA, TEACCH also requires intensive one-on-one training.

These treatments are not covered by all insurance plans.

Want to learn more?

Visit www.healthwise.net/MagellanHealth and search for "autism." Find more information and helpful resources at MagellanHealthcare.com/Autism-Resources.

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