

How to Make an Informed Decision When Choosing an Intervention Treatment

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It is important for parents and caregivers of children diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to make an informed decision regarding treatment choices. There are so many treatment approaches and non-traditional therapies identified for ASD that it is often difficult to decide which one to choose. The most important thing to know is that at this time autism cannot be cured. However, research states that intensive early intervention and appropriate programming can make a significant difference in a child's ability to learn and keep pace with their peers (Schreibman, 2000).

The following is a list of treatment approaches and non-traditional therapies that a parent may encounter when investigating possible interventions for their child. Parents should thoroughly investigate potential treatments prior to making a decision.

Common Autism Treatments/Interventions/Non-Traditional Therapies:

Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA)
Discrete Trial Teaching
Floortime
TEACCH
Lovass Method
Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
Sensory Integration Therapy
Speech-Language Therapy
Auditory Training
Relationship Development Intervention (RDI)
Vitamin-Mineral Therapy
Special diets

*Please note this list is not exhaustive, rather it highlights most common therapies a parent may hear about

The following is a guideline for parents to help make an informed decision about choosing an intervention:

1. First gather information about the treatment. Utilize the internet, library, and other parents as resources. Use the following questions to gather information:
 - ✓ How are family members involved?
 - ✓ How much training is needed?
 - ✓ What is the frequency and length of treatment?
 - ✓ What are the costs?
 - ✓ How much support is provided?
 - ✓ Is there reliable evidence of the effectiveness?
 - ✓ Does the treatment address key components of autism (social interaction, communication, cognition, sensory)?
 - ✓ Are treatment goals individualized for each child and family?
 - ✓ Is the staff involved trained appropriately?
 - ✓ Is the staff involved licensed or overseen by someone who is? Be wary of individuals that do not have the appropriate credentials and are providing therapies for autism. Professionals (Psychologists, Teachers, Speech Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Behavior Analysts, etc.) should provide you with that information when requested.
 - ✓ Is the staff involved open to suggestions or the combinations of several therapies?
 - ✓ Does the staff use data? Taking data is very important to show the accuracy of teaching and determination of an individual's progress. A treatment that relies on subjective judgments is often in error.

Becoming educated on autism and the treatments available will help parents make the best choice for their child and family. For more information on questions to ask and about treatments go to:

www.nimh.nih.gov

<http://www.asatonline.org>

References:

Schreibman, L (2000) Intensive behavioral/psychoeducational treatments for autism: research needs and future directions. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 5. 373-380

Cohen, S. (2002). *Targeting Autism: What We Know, Don't Know, and Can Do to Help Young Children with Autism and Related Disorders*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.