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# Play is FUNdamental: The Importance of Play for Social Emotional Development

Lisa R. Audet, PhD, CCC-SLP

Moderated by:

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# Play is FUNdamental: The Importance of Play for Social Emotional Development

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# Lisa Audet Bio

- Dr. Lisa Audet has been a practicing SLP for 35 years. She has been on faculty in Speech Pathology & Audiology at Kent State University since 2000. She specializes in early childhood language development and disorders, low incidence disorders, autism, augmentative communication, and assistive technology. Dr. Audet has published and presented at the national and international level.



- Presenter Disclosure: Financial: Lisa Audet received an honorarium for this presentation. She directs the Autism Initiative for Research Education and Outreach at Kent State University and owns a private SLP practice. Nonfinancial: No relevant relationships to disclose.
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# Learning Outcomes

- Describe at least 3 important social behaviors children develop as a result of meaningful play experiences.
- Describe at least 3 important cognitive behaviors children develop as a result of meaningful play experiences.
- Identify at least 3 therapeutic behaviors the SLP can incorporate into play-based sessions to support the development of learning, executive function, and regulatory behaviors.



# Agenda

Introduction

Learning and Social Skills Needed for Success

Adopting a Play Based Mindset

Optimizing Play Foundations in Therapy

Examples

Questions



# Introduction

- Play and Social Emotional Development
- Regina was a 5 year old with autism.
- She had significant sensory defensiveness, self regulatory and social emotional difficulties
- Regina also wanted friends and would approach children in her preschool classroom often.
- Her teacher recognized Regina's unsuccessful bids for social interaction.
- Her teacher would comment to the peers so they would notice Regina's attempts
- Her teacher also engaged in pre-teaching to help Regina know how to enter into a play interaction.
- One day, the class was on the playground. The girls decided to sit in the sand box and cover their legs with sand. Ordinarily Regina would have run from such a sensory activity. Instead she followed her peers, enjoyed their company, and tolerated the sand on her legs.
- She could override her sensory issues because she had the "support" and relationship with her peers.



# Habits of the Mind (Costa & Kallich 2009)

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A set of skills, behaviors, attitudes that positively influence learning, socializing, and adaptive behavior.

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Developed by Costa and Kallich (2009) to support skills preschool children need to develop to become lifelong learners.

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The skills align directly with an individual's ability to manage himself, rely on others to manage emotions, and develop a range of executive functions.

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Adapted to intervention for children with ASD by L. Audet



# Why adapt Habits of the Mind to children with ASD?

- Problems with active engagement
- Problems with lifelong learning
- Core Features of ASD:
  - Deficits in socialization
  - Deficits in communication
  - Restricted interests and repetitive movements



# Habits of the Mind (Costa & Kallich, 2009)

- Learning and Social Skills Needed for Success
  - Persisting
  - Managing impulsivity
  - Listening to others with understanding and empathy
  - Thinking flexibly



# Habits of the Mind: Skills for Success Cont.

- Thinking about our thinking
- Striving for accuracy and precision
- Questioning and posing problems
- Applying past knowledge to new situations



# Habits of the Mind: Skills for Success Cont.

- Thinking and communicating with clarity and precision
- Gathering data through all the senses
- Creating, imagining, and innovation
- Responding with wonderment and awe

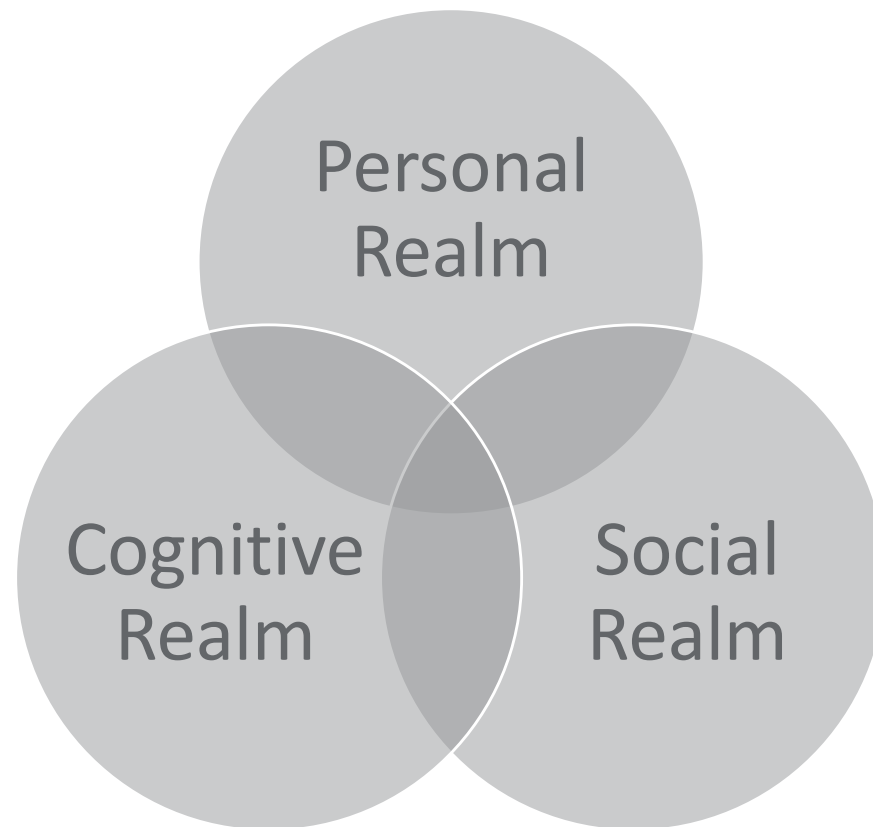


# Habits of the Mind: Skills for Success Cont.

- Taking responsible risks
- Finding humor
- Thinking interdependently
- Learning continuously



# Adapting a Play Based Mindset Integrating Habits of the Mind & ASD (Audet, 2013)



# Personal Realm

Pertains to Self Concept, Identity and Self Esteem

- In play children challenge themselves
- In the challenge they create ideas, test them out, and experience failure or success
- Children begin to experience confidence in their ability to manage the world
- As SLP we need to encourage the following Habits

## Habits of the Mind:

- Persistence
- Striving for accuracy and precision
- Creating, imagining, and innovation
- Taking responsible risks
- Finding humor



# Cognitive Realm

## Pertains to Thinking Skills and Problem Solving-Thinking Symbolically

- The challenges a child faces in play needs to motivate him to figure out the answer and know that he can do it (personal realm)
- Developmental stages of cognitive play align with problem solving and symbolic thinking
- Many of these areas support the development of executive functions which children with ASD desperately need our help developing.
- As SLPs we need to match our materials to the child's developmental level to pose that "just right challenge" Vygotsky wrote about.

### Habits of the Mind:

- Managing Impulsivity
- Taking Responsible Risks
- Thinking Flexibly and Thinking about our Thinking (meta cognitive/linguistic)
- Applying Past Knowledge to New Situations (Piaget: Assimilation/Accommodation)
- Creating, Imagining, Innovating
- Continual Learning



# Social Realm

Pertains to the Ability to Interact with Others

- In play children learn how to manage themselves (personal realm) in order to work with others
- Essential life, play, home, work skill
- As SLPs we need to balance our play demands to support a focus on social interactions

## Habits of the Mind

- Managing Impulses (also personal realm)
- Listening to Others with Understanding and Empathy
- Questioning and Posing Problems (also conflict resolution)
- Responding with Wonderment and Awe
- Thinking Interdependently
- Finding Humor



# Adopting a Play Based Mindset

## SLP Modeling of Habits of the Mind

Persisting	Allow the child to have a child sized problem and be present Watch and Parallel Talk You're working hard.
Managing Impulses	Wait! Let's Think! Or Darn that didn't work- but it's ok!
Listening with Understanding & Empathy	Wow, that was hard, but you did it.
Thinking Flexibly	That's a good idea. I wonder if it will work. Wanna try?



# SLP Behaviors to Adopt in Play Continued

Thinking about our Thinking	I Wonder If
Striving for Accuracy & Precision	We almost did it, let's try again
Questioning and posing problems	That one looks different. How do we get....
Applying past knowledge to new situations	Last time you_____and it made a mess. What can we do differently this time? OR Last time we made the tower on the table and it was tall. Do you think it will work the same on the rug:?



# SLP Play Based Behaviors Cont.

Thinking with Clarity & Precision	If I a....then b....might happen...I don't want b. Humm; I don't understand...
Gathering data through all the senses	Slowing down the lesson
Creating, imagining, innovating	I really like that. Interesting.
Responding with wonderment and awe	Look what you did. WOW!



# SLP Play Based Behaviors

## Cont...

Taking Responsible Risks	Trusting and allowing children to pace themselves.
Finding Humor	Mirroring and Reciprocity, non-verbal behaviors Laughing with the children You are so funny.
Thinking Interdependently	You agree with D. That was a good idea.
Learning Continuously	Today, I learned that when A then B. I'm gonna remember that when I am .....



# Example 1

- Jordan was 3 years old and diagnosed with autism. She was beginning to develop words and able to sustain attention to fine motor type tasks.
- When Jordan would enter a new environment, she would have a meltdown.
- Her therapist worked with her mom to assist in engaging in mutual regulatory activities (singing and deep pressure touch).
- As Jordan calmed, the therapist would note this and describe it to the mom. The therapist then encouraged mom to provide Jordan with various sensory toys (squishy balls) that she could use on her own.
- As Jordan accepted and used these self-regulatory toys and calmed (quieted voice and body), the therapist encouraged the mom to present a few (4) blocks Jordan could stack.
- Jordan stacked those blocks, looked at mom, and pointed to the basket where more were stored to request more.



## Example 2

- Isiah would reject most toys. He was 3, non-verbal, and often had meltdowns.
- It appeared that all Isiah wanted was a rubix cube to turn around, never matching the colors.
- Isiah's therapist also noticed that he would move away from her when she introduced something.
- The therapist did 2 things:
  - First she obtained a rubix cube and imitated Isiah's actions.
  - Second she obtained toys that a typically developing child would play with when non-verbal (cause effect toys). She had 2 similar items (2 busy boxes, 2 push tops, 2 pull toys).
- When Isiah played with the rubric the therapist imitated.
- She put out the cause effect toys and which ever one he engaged with she imitated him from a distance.
- She gradually got closer to the child and they shared their similar toys.
- In this the child learned about reciprocity and imitation.
- Socially the child learned to tolerate others in his space.



## Example 3

- Rick was 13 years old and had a TBI as the result of a stroke following open-heart surgery at 9 weeks of age.
- Rick wanted to engage with others, but his abrupt actions and poor fine and gross motor skills lead others to think he was aggressive.
- Indeed when Rick was thirsty, hungry, or tired his ability to manage his behaviors deteriorated.
- During his treatment as a young child a visual to Stop, Think, Make a Plan board was used to address the executive functioning difficulty Rick experienced as a result of his TBI.
- This plan was proactively used when he encountered concrete and social situations.
- Over time Rick was able to state what he wanted to see happening in interactions with peers and how he would handle situations that did not go according to plan.
- One example: Scott was supposed to deliver bread with his peers at an office building. Scott thought he would be the peer to carry the basket of bread. When this didn't happen, he said: Wait Wait. My Plan was to carry the bread. What happened?
- The schema of Stop, Think, Make A Plan had helped Rick socially and vocationally to solve a problem he encountered.



# Thank You & Questions

Obrigada!

