

Facilitating Social Development in Children and Adolescents with Epilepsy

Social Development

- Requirements for social development:
 - Strong and positive family relationships
 - Capable verbal/nonverbal receptive and expressive communication skills
 - Resilient, empathic peer relationships

Social Development: Toddlers, Preschoolers

- Social goals:
 - Warm, trusting relationships with significant adults
 - Shows positive self esteem, beginning of positive sense of self efficacy
 - Begins to develop control over impulses and behavior
 - Learns simple scripts for communicating, reciprocal behavior, begins to incorporate and label feelings

Social Development: Preschooler Intervention

- **Formal interventions:**
 - Speech, Occupational and Physical Therapy
 - Birth to Three/ Child Find (Special Education Programs)
 - Parent support/coaching groups

- **Informal interventions:**
 - Small, nurturant preschool programs
 - Regular opportunity for child initiated social play with similar peers

Social Development: Ages 6 - 12

- Social developmental milestones/goals of this age group:
 - Growing independence
 - Development of several “best” friends, learning to navigate peer relationships
 - Development of self definition
 - Continuing development of resilience, sense of self efficacy
 - Friendship is a necessity in the developmental process

Social Development: Interventions That Promote Acquisition of Social Goals

- Mentoring
 - A same gender, older “peer” who helps with homework, is a part of most organized play dates, is a “best” friend, strong role model, positive booster and social coach.

Social Development: Interventions That Promote Acquisition of Social Goals

- Traditional Social Skills Group
 - Teaches social competence – using role play, video, verbal and non verbal scripts (However, it is critical that the group participants develop trusting and empathic relationships with one another)

Social Development: Interventions That Promote Acquisition of Social Goals

- Psychotherapy as a one-to-one arena for social coaching, therapeutic intervention for:
 - skills development
 - processing emotional material
 - building resilience and sense of self efficacy
 - some suggested modalities – solution based, cognitive behavioral therapy, anxiety reduction (including hypnosis, biofeedback)

Social Development: Interventions That Promote Acquisition of Social Goals

- School consultation
 - Schools are usually very efficient and effective at managing the health related aspects of seizures – but teachers are provided with relatively little effective, pragmatic guidance in supporting, managing, educating the child with seizures who also presents with the common co morbidities of ADHD, anxiety, lowered social competence

Social Development: Interventions That Promote Acquisition of Social Goals

- These issues can be addressed through:
 - Accommodation
 - Differentiated instruction
 - Additional services – small group instruction, friendship groups
 - Working with teachers, parents, administrators to develop classroom settings which emphasize community, pro social attitudes and social skill development
 - Use of curriculum materials such as the Tribes Program which teaches the skills necessary for a positive, cooperative, socially supportive classroom environment

Social Development: Bullying

- Bullying Defined:
 - Behavior intended to harm or disturb, includes gossip, shunning, exclusion
 - Occurs repeatedly
 - Generally, involves a power imbalance
 - Bullying is NOT a normal, natural part of growing up!

Social Development: Bullying

- Bullying can result in serious academic, emotional, social problems. The consequences for the child or adolescent being bullied are devastating.

Social Development: Bullying

- Two types of bullies:
 1. Aggressive bully – an individual who is belligerent, fearless, coercive, tough and impulsive
 2. Passive bully – Anxious bullies. Associated with aggressive bullies and supports, actively participates once the bullying begins, or bullies under the direction of the aggressive bully

Social Development: Bullying Interventions

- School-based intervention:
 - A clear code of conduct which spells out a no tolerance policy for bullying, irrespective of where it occurs – with clear cut examples of what constitutes unacceptable behavior. Enforcement requires teachers tightly supervising both instructional and noninstructional parts of the school day, as well as video monitoring.

Social Development: Bullying

- Other interventions:
 - School-based/agency/private mental health professionals use standardized bullying inventories to elicit problems
 - Circle of Friends
 - Kid Power
 - Facilitated group therapy
 - School-based/agency/private mental health professionals use standardized bullying inventories to elicit problems

Social Development: Personal Safety

- Interventions:
 - IEP goals from upper elementary should include goals for personal safety training
 - Kid Power programs
 - Video monitoring throughout the school