

"INSTITUTIONAL AUTISM": AN ACQUIRED SYNDROME IN ADOPTED CHILDREN FROM TRAUMATIC BACKGROUNDS

- **UNIQUE SET OF LEARNED BEHAVIORS RESERVED FOR CHILDREN RESIDING IN INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS**
- **SIMILAR IN PRESENTATION TO CLASSIC AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDERS**
- **INTENSITY OF INSTITUTIONAL AUTISM CORRELATED TO TIME SPENT IN INSTITUTIONAL SETTING**
- **COEXISTING POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER AND ATTACHMENT-TRAUMA WITH WIDE RANGE OF NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL IMPAIRMENTS**
- **RESPONSIVE TO ENVIRONMENTAL AND INTERACTIONAL THERAPIES (i.e. recovery)**
- **RESPONSIVE TO CONSERVATIVE PSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY AND "SAFE REALITY "**

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ASSESSMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL AUTISM

- **ABSENCE OF AUTISTIC DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY**
- **ABSENCE OF FAMILY-GENETIC HISTORY FOR AUTISM**
- **APPROPRIATE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT OF SPEECH AND SOCIAL-RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIPS**
- **LOSS OF PREVIOUSLY ACQUIRED LANGUAGE OR REGRESSION TO "INSTITUTIONAL LANGUAGE" BASED OF DEPRIVATION**
- **ACTUAL LOSS OF PHYSICAL HEIGHT, WEIGHT AND GROWTH PARAMETERS (GENERAL DEVELOPMENTAL FAILURES)**
- **DIFFICULTY IN ASSESSING AGE AND SEX UPON PRESENTATION IN ORPHANAGE SETTING**

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- **LACK OF IDENTITY DIFFERENTIATION (ENMESHMENT INTO THE "GROUP COHESIVENESS" OF THE INSTITUTION)**
- **GRADUAL DETERIORATION IN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND "PRAGMATICS" AND SOCIAL-INTERPERSONAL BEHAVIORS CORRELATING TO TIME IN INSTITUTION**
- **REGRESSION TO ENCOPRETIC AND ENURETIC BEHAVIORS**
- **CHRONICITY OF DEPRIVATION AND NEGLECT CORRELATING TO A LOSS IN NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTIONING (SPEECH, MEMORY, PROBLEM SOLVING, ATTENTION, ORGANIZATION, EXECUTIVE SKILLS)**
- **REGRESSION (OR EMERGENCE) TO SELF-STIMULATING BEHAVIORS, PARTICULARLY STEREOTYPIC MOVEMENTS AND SELF-INJURIOUS BEHAVIORS**
 - **TIME OCCUPYING**
 - **PTSD/ATTACHMENT DISORDER/DEPRESSION/APATHY**

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- **GRADUAL LACK OF INTEREST OR "GIVING UP" ATTACHMENTS**
- **REGRESSION TO DESPERATION, LONELINESS AND CHRONIC DESPAIR (ACQUIESCE TO INSTITUTIONAL LIFE)**
- **"WALKING WOUNDED" MENTALITY ("Anhedonic Depression")**
- **STRONG POTENTIAL FOR DIMINISHING SYMPTOMS OVER TIME AND DE-INSTITUTIONALIZATION**
- **COGNITIVE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL REHABILITATION POTENTIAL FOLLOWING INSTITUTIONAL DETOXIFICATION**
- **REQUIRES ACTIVE FAMILY INVOLVEMENT TO MAINTAIN STABILITY AND PROMOTE "DEVELOPMENTAL RE-TRACKING"**

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INNOVATIVE TREATMENT FOR THE POST-INSTITUTIONALIZED CHILD:

DETOXIFICATION FROM INSTITUTIONALIZATION

- **AGGRESSIVE AND REGRESSIVE THERAPY TO ADDRESS INSTITUTIONAL AUTISM OR POST-INSTITUTIONALIZATION**
- **PROPER DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS REQUIRED**
 - ORGANIC VS. PSYCHIATRIC PATHOLOGY
 - CLASSIC MENTAL RETARDATION OR AUTISM VS. ACQUIRED AUTISTIC SYNDROME DUE TO INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTS
 - MEDICAL COMPLICATIONS AFFECTING NEUROPSYCHOLOGY
- **FAMILY ORIENTED MODEL FOR REHABILITATION**
- **AIMED AT "IDENTITY RECONSTRUCTION" AND STIMULATION**

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INSTITUTIONAL DETOXIFICATION PROCEDURES

- **1. PRE AND POST-ADOPTION TRAINING FOR FAMILIES**
- **2. ACCEPTANCE OF "DETACHMENT" AS COPING**
- **3. RECONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH AS OPPOSED**
- **4. GRADUAL RESHAPING OF PERSONALITY STRUCTURE**
- **5. ABSOLUTE REDUCTION IN STIMULATION**
 - ENVIRONMENTALLY CONTROLLED STIMULATION
 - MINIMUM OF 6 MONTHS (CASE BY CASE)
- **6. MAINTAINING NATIVE LANGUAGE (RECOMMENDED)**

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- **7. TOTAL "ADULTS ONLY SUPERVISION"**
- **8. ABSOLUTELY NO DAYCARE OR BABYSITTING**
- **9. INITIAL SEPARATION FROM EXTENDED FAMILY AND NEW SOCIAL SITUATIONS**
- **10. FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT CONSISTENT WITH INSTITUTION WITH GRADUAL INTRODUCTION OF NEW FOOD GROUPS**
 - FOOD USED AS REINFORCER
 - AVOID FOOD OBSESSIONS/COMPULSIONS
 - MEALS AS A FORM OF INTERACTION AND MODELING
 - ABSOLUTELY NO HOARDING
 - FOOD FROM CULTURE PREFERRED

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- **11. RECREATION OF THE INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT**
 - SAME STRUCTURE/SCHEDULE
 - SIMILAR ROOM AND ENVIRONMENTAL APPEARANCE
 - MINIMAL STIMULI
- **12. "ADULTS ONLY" PLAY TO "RECONSTRUCT RELATIONSHIPS" AND TEACHING OF CUES / BOUNDARIES**
- **13. ADULTS DICTATE ALL ACTIVITIES IN "REALITY"**
 - WAKING
 - HYGIENE
 - EATING/SLEEPING/MANNERS
 - MOVEMENTS AROUND HOME
 - PLAY AND ACTIVITIES (NOTHING ISOLATED)
 - NEATNESS AND ORGANIZATION
 - INTERACTIONS WITH OUTSIDERS NOT ALLOWED
 - EXPOSURE TO NEW EXPERIENCES GRADUALLY
 - GENERAL DAILY ROUTINES FIXED AND REINFORCED

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- **14. NO TELEVISION, VIDEO GAMES, MOVIES**
 - ONLY "SOFT" VIDEOS WITH PARENTS
 - Absolutely NO Isolated "Glowing Boxes"
- **15. SOCIALIZATION IS ALLOWED WITH ONE OR TWO CHILDREN/FAMILIES WORKING WITHIN THE SAME CONTEXT**
- **16. CAREFUL SELECTION OF SCHOOL PROGRAM**
 - INITIAL TIME AT HOME WITH FAMILY-30-60 DAYS
 - GRADUAL INCREASE IN SCHOOL HOURS
 - EXTENSIVE SUPERVISION IN SCHOOL IF POSSIBLE
 - REMOVAL FROM SCHOOL IF NEEDED
 - PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE CLASSROOM
 - STRONG TEACHER/STRONG STAFF/ NO TOUCHING
 - WATCH INDISCRIMINATE FRIENDLINESS
 - SUPERVISED FREE TIME
 - SUPERVISED AND GOAL DIRECTED PLAY
 - NO "SPECIAL STATUS" IN SCHOOL

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- **17. ABSOLUTELY NO INDISCRIMINATE FRIENDLINESS ALLOWED**
 - RESTRICTION ON TOUCHING, GRABBING, SHOVING, CLINGING, OR INAPPROPRIATE CONTACT
- **18. REQUIRED "DETACHMENT" OF PARENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS TO RECREATE "HEALTHY BOUNDARIES"**
 - BUSINESS-LIKE AND OBJECTIVE PARENTING
 - MANDATORY PHYSICAL SPACE BETWEEN PARENT-CHILD
 - AVOIDANCE OF HUGGING/KISSING/TOUCHING
 - COMPLIANCE AS INITIAL COMMUNICATION/ATTACHMENT
 - FIRM LIMITS AND INSTRUCTIONS TO OTHERS
 - PARENTAL/FAMILY CONSISTENCY
 - PARENTS MUST DEFER THEIR NEED FOR LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE
 - BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD MUST TAKE PRIORITY

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- **19. EARNING EVERYTHING: "EVERYTHING IS EARNED"**
 - CHRISTMAS IS "ONCE A YEAR"
 - NO INDULGENCE ("NO GOOD DEED GOES UNPUNISHED")
 - NO GIFTS, TOYS, CANDY OR UNEARNED TREATS
 - NO SPECIAL BONUSES (EARN EVERYTHING, EVERYTHING EARNED)
 - AVOID SUCCUMING TO NEEDINESS AND INSECURITY
 - AVOID PERMISSIVE PARENTING
 - AVOID INDESCRIMINANT ATTACHMENTS BY PARENTS
 - ROUTINES MAINTAINED DAILY
 - CONTINGENCIES APPLIED: ("DO THIS FIRST AND THEN GET THIS")
 - GIVE TASKS, GIVE REINFORCEMENTS
 - CONTINUAL PRACTICE OF ROUTINE
 - MANDATORY COMPLIANCE-STOP THE VIOLENCE AND DEFIANCE AND DETACHMENT
 - PARENTAL ROLE-MODELING/REHEARSAL OF TASKS
 - WORKING TOGETHER AT ALL TIMES
 - DAILY AND WEEKLY SCHEDULES AND "LEVEL SYSTEMS"

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PRACTICING AND REHEARSING NEW BEHAVIORS

- **CLASSICAL AND OPERANT CONDITIONING TECHNIQUES**
- **"TEACHING" NEW MODES OF BEHAVIOR AND RELATING**
 - ROLE MODELING (BE A STRONG, SOLID PARENT "IN CONTROL" OF YOUR OWN EMOTIONAL RESPONSES
 - TRIAL AND ERROR; PRACTICE AND PRACTICE
 - SHAPING AND REHEARSAL AND ROLE PLAYING
 - REINFORCEMENT FOR ALL PROSOCIAL ATTEMPTS
- **COUNTER-CONDITIONING TECHNIQUES**
 - WHEN AND WHERE TO "ROCK AND SELF-STIMULATE"
 - CONDITION ALTERNATE RESPONSES TO SELF-STIMULATION
 - GRADUALLY ATTACH AVERSIVE STIMULI TO NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS
 - EFFECTIVE (CALM, RATIONAL AND FIRM) DISCIPLINE

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COGNITIVE REHABILITATION FOR EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- **STIMULATING DAMAGED/DELAYED COGNITIVE ABILITIES**
 - **SPEECH/LANGUAGE THERAPIES**
 - **OCCUPATIONAL/PHYSICAL THERAPY/SENSORY ORGANIZATION**
 - **COGNITIVE THERAPIES AND ENRICHMENT OF CRITICAL THINKING**
 - **RESTRUCTURING IRRATIONAL THOUGHTS AND BEHAVIORS**
 - **IMPROVING AUDITORY AND VISUAL-PERCEPTUAL SKILLS**
 - **INCREASING VISUAL ATTENTION TO HUMAN EMOTIONS**
 - **INCREASING MEMORY AND RETENTION FOR NEW BEHAVIORS**
 - **PRINCIPLES OF REALITY THERAPY**
 - **UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE: RIGHT VS. WRONG**
 - **TAKING TOTAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL ACTIONS**
 - **RESPECTING SELF AND OTHERS AT ALL TIMES**
 - **NEUROLINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING TECHNIQUES**