Improving Self-Determination: A Strengths-Based Transition Intervention for a Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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At the end of the session, we hope you will be able to:

**Describe** outcomes of a strength-based intervention for a student with an autism spectrum disorder transitioning from school to post-secondary life.

**Distinguish** the role of therapists and parents in fostering self-determination in youth with autism spectrum disorder.

**Identify** actions therapists, parents, and other professionals can take in implementing approaches to fostering self-determination and measurement of self-determination.
What is Self Determination?

- Turn to your partner and discuss what you think this means.
- Write your ideas around the room
- OR
- Post to www.nearpod.com

“I am not what happened to me, I am what I choose to become.”
—Carl Gustav Jung
What is Self Determination?

- Knowing and believing in yourself
- Knowing what you want in the future AND making plans to achieve those goals
- Knowing and asking for the supports you need to achieve your goal
- Ability to monitor and regulate one’s own action
- Characteristics of a person that lead them to make choices and decision based on their own preferences and interests
Why is Self-Determination Important?

- Greater self-determination is associated with better adult outcomes for youth with disabilities.

- Youth with greater self-determination are significantly more likely to report higher community access and employment a year after high-school than youth with lower self-determination.

  - Shogren, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Rifenbark, Little (2015)
  - Wehmeyer & Schwartz (1997)
What Do We Know about Self-Determination?

- Self-determination is **changeable**
  - Wehmeyer et al (2011)

- Self-determination is **measureable**

- **Evidence-based approaches exist** to support youth in developing self-determination
  - ChoiceMaker (Martin, Marshall, Maxson, & Jerman, 1996)
  - Self-Advocacy Strategy (Van Reusen, Bos, Schumaker, & Deshler, 1994)
  - Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (Wehmeyer, Palmer, Agran, Mithaug, & Martin, 2000)
  - Steps to Self-Determination (Field & Hoffman, 1996)
  - Whose Future Is It Anyway? (Wehmeyer et al., 2004)

*Note: This Literature pertains to samples with a variety of youth with disabilities*
Self-Determination in Autism Spectrum Disorders

**Self-determination is lower among youth with autism spectrum disorders**, as compared to youth with intellectual disability, and youth with learning disabilities (Chou, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Lee, 2014)

- **WHY? Unknown. Potential Reasons:**
  - **Capacity**
    - Self-determination is associated with social-skills (e.g. Nota, Ferrari, Soresi, & Wehmeyer, 2007)
  - **Opportunity**
    - Not given a chance to practice making decisions for self in home, school, community

- Parents, educators, other providers should be aware that supports provided to improve self-determination should be tailored
How do we know when someone has improved in their self-determination?

A person will demonstrate self-determination through:

- Making choices based on free will without interference
- Proactively solving problems
- Taking responsibility for oneself
- Having the self-confidence to act
- Directing their own life
- Knowing their own strengths and weaknesses (challenges)
- Accurately evaluating their strengths
- Ability to be disciplined and solve problems
- Engaging in self-reflection /self-evaluation
- Setting their own goals and then seeking to accomplish them
- Believing that achievements are under their control
Tips for Parents in Addressing Self Determination

- Students **need to be directly taught skills** that lead them toward becoming self-determined individuals.

- Acquiring the characteristics that lead to self-determination is a **developmental process** that begins in early childhood and continues through adulthood.


**ASPIRE Parents:**

- https://youtu.be/h5WQArT-CtQ

**Your Voice:**

Two valid and reliable measures have been examined for use in youth with autism:

1. **The Arc’s Self-Determination Scale** – Student self report
   
   (Wehmeyer et al., 1995; Wehmeyer, Shogren, Palmer, & Lee, 2014; Chou, Wehmeyer, Palmer, & Lee, in press)

   72 items, 4 domains:
   - Autonomy (32 items)
   - Self-Regulation (9 items)
   - Psychological Empowerment (16 items)
   - Self-Realization (15 items)

2. **The AIR Self-Determination Scale (AIR)** – Student, Parent, Educator versions available
   
   (Wolman, Campeu, Dubois, Mithaug, & Stolarski, 1994)

   24 items with 2 subscales:
   - Capacity (“Things I Do”, “How I Feel”)
   - Opportunity (perceptions of opportunity)
Example of Arc Items

**Autonomy:**

I do school and free time activities based on my career interests:

-- I do not even if I have the chance
-- I do sometimes when I have the chance
-- I do most of the time I have the chance
-- I do every time I have the chance

Self-Regulation:

33. **Beginning:** You are sitting in a planning meeting with your parents and teachers. You want to take a class where you can learn to work as a cashier in a store. Your parents want you to take the Family and Child Care class. You can only take one of the classes.

   Middle: ________________________________

   ________________________________

   ________________________________

   ________________________________

**Ending:** The story ends with you taking a vocational class where you will learn to be a cashier.

   Story Score ______
### Examples of AIR Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I check how I’m doing when I’m working on my plan. If I need to, I ask others what they think of how I’m doing.</td>
<td>□ 1</td>
<td>□ 2</td>
<td>□ 3</td>
<td>□ 4</td>
<td>□ 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>If my plan doesn’t work, I try another one to meet my goals.</td>
<td>□ 1</td>
<td>□ 2</td>
<td>□ 3</td>
<td>□ 4</td>
<td>□ 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Things I Do – Total Items 3 + 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. People at school listen to me when I talk about what I want, what I need, or what I’m good at.</td>
<td>□ 1</td>
<td>□ 2</td>
<td>□ 3</td>
<td>□ 4</td>
<td>□ 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. People at school let me know that I can set my own goals to get what I want or need.</td>
<td>□ 1</td>
<td>□ 2</td>
<td>□ 3</td>
<td>□ 4</td>
<td>□ 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### What Happens at School – Total Items 1 + 2
How to Improve Self-Determination

Let’s Share:

SELF-ADVOCATE PERSPECTIVE

PARENT PERSPECTIVE

PROVIDE PERSPECTIVE

Go confidently in the direction of your dreams!
Live the life you’ve imagined.

-Thoreau
Case: Scott, a 16 year old with autism

Setting for Intervention
- School for students with learning differences and takes two classes at local high school
- Strengths: highly verbal, social, polite, skill with computers, spatial navigation, and maps

Measurement
- AIR Self Determination Scale (AIR), ARC Self Determination Scale (SDS)
- Qualitative interview
- Measurement at week 0 (Pretest 1), week 9 (Pretest 2), week 20 (Post test)

Baseline (wks 0-9)
- Usual Care (UC) OT: pre vocational/social skills group, OT/Speech Language Pathology (SLP) collaborative sessions & consultations

Intervention (wks 10-19)
- 40 min/wk individual OT focusing on student-identified goals
- Strengths based planning meeting with student-identified stakeholders
Scott’s Goals—Qualitative

Pretest Week 0 (Pretest 1)—To get places by car, bus; ‘to get people to like me’

Pretest Week 9 (Pretest 2)—To work at AAA; to get my learner’s permit, ‘to get people to respect me and for me to be respectful’

Posttest Week 20—Learn how to get a job for the summer, learn how to decide on classes for next year, ‘to make new friends’
What Happened During Sessions?

- Discussion with Scott regarding strengths, goals, beliefs about self, interests
- Supported Scott in identifying opportunities for choice at school and at home
- Provided learning opportunities for decision-making with support
- Helped Scott plan strengths-based transition meeting
- Facilitated Scott’s ability to lead the meeting to accomplish goals
- Facilitated learning activities to plan action steps to reach goals in collaboration with Scott’s preferred team.

Outside of School

1. Meeting with mom
2. Discussion with transition coordinator
3. Discussion with other teachers
1. Introduction
   - Why are we here?

2. My Strengths
   - Maps
   - Windows movie maker
   - Helping people with ordinary things
   - Good with computers

3. Role Models and qualities
   - Mom, second mom (Suzanne), Steve
   - Write notes, do help
   - Mom, write notes, do help

4. My Values
   - My ideal job would have...
   - Independence, working with people, guidance, support, working results, autonomy, relatively, roaming around, feedback

5. Work environment
   - Medium pace, medium

6. Education goals - MCC, home with mom
   - Grad school in 4 years

7. Jobs I am interested in
   - Short term/Summer - PT: People, maps - bike, C.V., race
   - Part-time/Summer FT: Maps, bikes, CV, races
   - Long term/Summer-FT: Maps, bikes, C.V., races

8. Plan
   - Volunteer ECO bike/skate board
   - English-speaking
   - Working with elderly
   - Attend summer program with job coaches, job shadowing

Tour MCC with mom

Tech classes, intro to M.C. office

Tech brochure to check for 11:17

Career expl class & personal finance

Practice typing, help looking

Steiner - check prerequisite

Look up grad regs

Contact - K.B., ret. transitions class
Changes in Self-Determination as Measured on the ARC Self-Determination Scale (SDS)

Domains and Total SDS Score

Percentile Compared with Normative Sample

- AutonomyDomainTot
- SelfRegDomainTot
- PsychEmpowerDomainTot
- SelfRealizationDomainTot
- SelfDeterminationTotal

Pretest1
Pretest2
Posttest
Items that Reflected Change in Psychological Empowerment

I tell others when I have new or different ideas or opinions Versus
I usually agree with other people’s opinions or ideas

I tell people when they have hurt my feelings Versus
I am afraid to tell people when they have hurt my feelings

I can make my own decisions Versus
Other people make decisions for me
Qualitative data about IEP versus the student-led meeting focused on strengths and student goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scotty’s Responses Regarding His Involvement in Transition Meetings (IEP versus SBPM)</th>
<th>IEP Meeting</th>
<th>Strengths-Based Planning Meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How involved were you?</td>
<td>“Not really involved that much”</td>
<td>“50%, I physically led the meeting.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who planned the meeting?</td>
<td>“My mom and case manager”</td>
<td>“Me, with help.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you prepare?</td>
<td>“No”</td>
<td>“Yes, I told you things that interested me, invited people, wrote notes for me and the agenda, role played the meeting.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you go at the beginning?</td>
<td>“No they called me in...when they are done with me, they are done with me, and I go back to my afternoon.”</td>
<td>“Yes, I was early.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you feel comfortable sharing?</td>
<td>“I don’t really feel comfortable.”</td>
<td>“At the beginning, no, once I continued, yes.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think you made the decisions?</td>
<td>“No, the adults in the room do.”</td>
<td>“A little bit, I mean you guys helped me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Thoughts?</td>
<td>“I was nervous and shy but... I have matured to where I could do some stuff.”</td>
<td>“My mom was REALLY proud of me!”</td>
</tr>
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Results of this pilot single-case study suggest that the Arc SDS\(^8\) results aligned with student expressed outcomes regarding future goals.
Questions?
Can You...?

Describe outcomes of a strength-based intervention for a student with an autism spectrum disorder transitioning from school to post-secondary life.

Distinguish the role of therapists and parents in fostering self-determination in youth with autism spectrum disorder.

Identify actions therapists, parents, and other professionals can take in implementing approaches to fostering self-determination and measurement of self-determination.
References for Existing Self-Determination Curricula


References of Measurement Tools


- Article which examines these two measures:
Other References


Links to Videos and Other Resources

https://vimeo.com/45742131
http://www.imdetermined.org/
http://www.imdetermined.org/resources/detail/tips_for_parents
http://www.imdetermined.org/parents/videos/
http://ngsd.org/everyone/what-self-determination
https://www.autismspeaks.org/docs/family_services_docs/SelfDetermination.pdf
http://www.ocali.org/project/tg_aata/page/self_determination

Articles: