



Promoting Meaningful Days and Life
Quality among Older Adults with
Developmental Disabilities:
Evidence-Based Strategies

Denny Reid, Ph.D., BCBA-D



Foundation for Quality in
Services and Supports for
Adults

- *Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness*
 - and with dignity



Agenda

- Focus of adult services (vs. child services)
- Meaningful vs. nonmeaningful days
- Key staff skills
- Key supervisor skills
- Promoting daily enjoyment



Services for Adults versus Children

- Similarities
 - Desire for quality
 - Importance of evidence-based approach
- Differences
 - Focus on here and now vs. future
 - Increased emphasis on life enjoyment and individual preferences
 - Staff resources



A Focus on Meaningful Days

- Long-standing issue: *life wasting*
- Especially an issue for adults with severe disabilities
- Only about 20% are involved in integrated, community activities and life



How Most Adults with Severe Disabilities Spend Their Weekdays

- Over 70% do not work
- Among those that work, the job is usually part time and involves contract work
- There are notable exceptions
- Most spend their weekdays in congregate or center-based settings



Meaningful Days Require:

- Meaningful context
- Effective teaching services
 - (keep in mind reduced staffing)



General Continuum of Meaningful Activities for Adults with Disabilities

- DAY SUPPORT PROGRAMS & SETTINGS
- **Usually Most Functional**
 - Working in a real job
 - Working in a supported job
 - Individual job placement
 - Work crews, enclaves, agency-based job
 - Sheltered, contract work
 - Individual table-top activities in a congregate setting
- **Usually Least Functional**





References for Meaningful Skills and Activities

- Reid, D.H., Parsons, M.B., & Rotholz, D.A. (2015). *Positive Behavior Support Training Curriculum, 3rd Edition*. American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.
- Reid, D.H., & Parsons, M.B. (2017). *Quality Activities in Center-Based Programs for Adults with Autism: Moving from Nonmeaningful to Meaningful*. Elsevier Press.



Long-Term Case Example

- Reid, D.H., Parsons, M.B., & Jensen, J.M. (2017). Maintaining staff performance following a training intervention: Suggestions from a 30-year case example. *Behavior Analysis in Practice*



Key Staff Skills for Providing Quality Adult Services

- Naturalistic Teaching
- Identifying Preferences
- Group Interaction



Naturalistic Teaching

- Teaching at the moment a skill is needed
- Also called incidental teaching or embedded teaching
- Naturalistic teaching is a key component of support: instructing an individual to do part or all of an activity instead of doing it for the person (e.g., opening a car door, turning off a light, selecting foods at the grocery store)



Think:

- Before doing it for an individual, can you teach the person to do part or all of it him/herself?
- SWAT
 - Say
 - Wait and watch
 - Act out
 - Wait and watch
 - Touch to guide
 - (and of course, reinforce)



Resource for Naturalistic Teaching

- Parsons, Reid, & Lattimore (2009). Increasing independence of adults with autism in community activities: A brief, embedded teaching strategy. *Behavior Analysis in Practice, 2*, 40-48.



Group Interaction Skills

- Respecting dignity of adult status
 - Locally accepted "social reciprocity"
- Distribution of attention
 - Focus on positive or common social vs. negative
 - To promote meaningful engagement
 - To enhance enjoyment
 - To reduce (some) problem behavior



References for Group Interaction

- Distribution of attention
 - Reid (2016). *Promoting happiness among adults with autism and other severe disabilities*.
www.behaviordevelopmentsolutions.com
- Respecting dignity
 - Reid, Rosswurm, & Rotholz (2018). No less worthy: Recommendations for behavior analysts treating adults with IDD with dignity. *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, 11.



Importance of Accurately Identifying and Respecting Preferences

- Essence of person-centered supports and services
- Promotes meaningful engagement (leisure activity, work behavior)
- Promotes enjoyment



Identifying Activity Preferences

- Caregiver opinion
 - Advantages
 - Disadvantages
- Evidence-based, systematic preference assessments
 - Multi-stimulus without replacement (for people with more severe disabilities)
 - Situational assessment (for people with less severe disabilities and functional communication skills)



Key Supervisor Skills (and Performance Expectations)

- Evidence-based training
- Systematic and objective monitoring of staff work performance
- Provision of feedback
- Motivating staff (proficient work with enjoyment)



Supervisor Monitoring of Staff Performance

- Must be ongoing for key areas of staff performance
- Results of monitoring must be used regularly to support or correct staff performance
- Whose performance should be monitored?
- Monitoring should occur in an *acceptable* manner



Supervisors Must Be Skilled In, and Routinely Provide, Feedback

- Monitoring is essentially only as useful and the feedback that follows it
- Supervisors must regularly provide feedback to support and as necessary, correct staff performance



Feedback Protocol

1. Begin with positive or empathetic statement
2. Identify skills performed correctly
3. Identify skills performed incorrectly
4. Specify how to change/improve incorrect performance
5. Solicit questions
6. Describe next actions
7. End with positive or empathetic statement



Resource for Developing, Maintaining, and Motivating Staff Performance

- Reid, Parsons, & Green (2012). *The supervisor's guidebook: Evidence-based strategies for promoting work quality and enjoyment among human service staff*. Morganton, NC: Habilitative Management Consultants, Inc.
- www.behaviordevelopmentsolutions.com



Why Focus on Happiness?

- *Pursuit of happiness is a fundamental right*
- *Happiness a primary concern of family members*
- *Reductions in problem behavior*
- *Special concern for adults*



In Some Ways, Happiness a Risky Venture in ABA

- A private event
- Usually measured by verbal report – can be risky
- Verbal reports very difficult for people who lack vocal communication
- Still, happiness is viewed by society as important . . .
 - For adults with autism, it should not be taken for granted; it should be targeted and addressed like any other desired outcome



Evidence-Based Protocol to Promote Happiness

- Identify indices of happiness and unhappiness
- Validate identified indices
- Act to increase *situations* accompanied by happiness indices
- Act to decrease *situations* accompanied by unhappiness indices
- Monitor and evaluate routinely



Validating Happiness and Unhappiness Indices

- Identify situations in which a person usually experiences happiness and unhappiness
- Observe indices in above situations
- Compare occurrence of indices across situations
- Provide repeated choices

REFERENCE
Identifying and Validating Indices of Happiness
and Unhappiness among Adults with Autism
(and severe intellectual disabilities)



Parsons, M. B., Reid, D. H., Bentley, E., Inman, A., & Lattimore, L. P. (2012). Identifying indices of happiness and unhappiness among adults with autism: Potential targets for behavioral assessment and intervention. *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, 5, 15-25

www.abainternational.org

Familiarizing New Staff for
Working with
Adults with Severe Disabilities:
A Case for Relationship Building



Parsons, M.B., Bentley, E., Solari, T., & Reid, D.H. (2016). *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, 9, 211-222.

Purpose

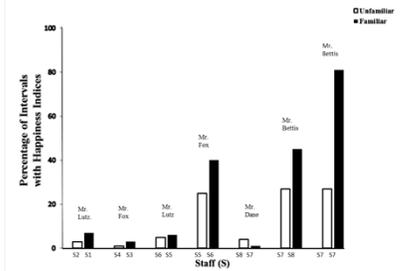


- Evaluate effects of familiar vs. unfamiliar staff on behavior of adults with autism on severe end of spectrum
- Evaluate effects of a familiarization process for new staff



General Procedures

- Setting (work focus)
- Participants
 - 4 men with features of autism on the severe end of the spectrum
- DVs: happiness and unhappiness indices, compliance, problem behavior, on task
- Familiarization program: fun time and phase-in





Developing a Relationship: Summary

- Spend time doing things that the person likes to do
 - *Fun Time Program*
- Establish familiarity (phase-in)
- *Occurrence of happiness indices during interactions suggests a good relationship*



Evidence-Based Strategies for Promoting Happiness

- Establishing relationships
- Providing daily choices
- Identifying and promoting routine access to preferences
- Making disliked but necessary activities more enjoyable



Making Undesired Activities More Enjoyable: Example

- *Preference-Based Teaching*
 - Reid & Green (2005)
 - www.behaviordevelopmentsolutions.com
- *Rationale*
 - Some learners engage in challenging behavior to escape or avoid teaching programs
 - If teaching programs are fun, no need for challenging behavior



Reference for Increasing Happiness

- Reid, D.H. (2016). *Promoting Happiness Among Adults with Autism and Other Severe Disabilities: Evidence-Based Strategies*.
- www.behaviordevelopmentsolutions.com



Don't Forget Support Staff

- It is unlikely staff will effectively promote happiness among individuals they support if the staff are frequently discontented with their work environment



Contact

- Denny Reid
 - drcba@outlook.com
