



About Autism

Education

Most professionals agree that individuals with autism respond well to highly structured, specialized education programs designed to meet the individual's needs. Based on the major characteristics associated with autism, there are areas that are important to look at when creating a plan: social skill development, communication, behaviour, and sensory integration.

Programs sometimes include several treatment components coordinated to assist a person with autism. For example, one individual's program may consist of speech therapy, social skill development and the use of medication, all within a structured behavior program. For someone else this may include social skill development, sensory integration and dietary changes. No one program or diet is perfect for every person with autism. It's important to try several approaches and find the ones that work best on an individual basis.

With all of that said, parents and professionals need to work together. Teachers should have some understanding of an individual's behaviour and communication skills at home, and parents should let teachers know about their expectations as well as what techniques work at home. Open communication between school staff and parents can lead to better evaluation of a student's progress.

Community goals like purchasing meals and grocery shopping should be reinforced through work at school, just as parents' goals for their child outside of school, such as the development of leisure activities, should be reinforced. Cooperation between parents and professionals can lead to increased success for the individual with autism.

Academic goals need to be tailored to the individual's intellectual ability and functioning level. Some may need help in understanding social situations and developing appropriate responses. Others may exhibit aggressive or self-injurious behaviour, and need assistance managing their behaviours.

No one program will meet the needs of all individuals with the disability, so it is important to find the program or programs that best fit your perceived needs. Just like with treatment approaches, educational programs should be tailored to individual needs, be flexible and be re-evaluated on a regular basis.