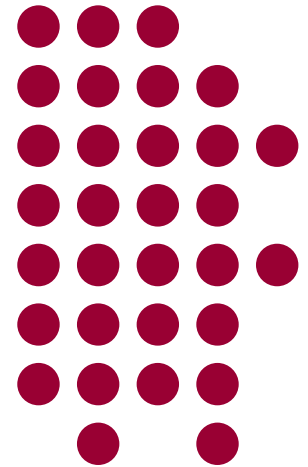


Developmental Asynchrony

Embracing the “Inner Toddler” in SMS

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Smith-Magenis Syndrome

CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

- Attention-seeking: Crave one-to-one interactions with adults
- Often in competition with peers or siblings for staff or parent attention
- Perseveration - repeatedly asking the same question

Smith-Magenis Syndrome

CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

- Poor impulse control
- Aggressive hugging of others
- Prolonged tantrums, outbursts
- Difficulty adjusting to changes in routine
- Poor sense of time - can't be rushed!

Smith-Magenis Syndrome

POSITIVE ASPECTS

- Engaging, endearing, and full of personality!
- Appreciative of attention
- Eager to please
- Sense of humor
- Communicative

Smith-Magenis Syndrome

POSITIVE ASPECTS

- Responsive to structure and routine
- Motivated by a variety of reinforcers, activities
- Causes of aggression, outbursts often identifiable
- Outbursts, aggression can often be redirected if caught early



SMITH-MAGENIS SYNDROME

relatively high
cognitive and
social abilities

versus

very young
emotional
development

“EMOTIONAL TODDLER” IN SMS

- Emotionally volatile
- Low frustration tolerance
- Prone to tantrums / outbursts
- Attention-seeking
- Distractible
- Excitable
- Reactive
- Multisensory learners

“EMOTIONAL TODDLER” IN SMS

- Inconsistent (“Yes / no” game)
- Upset by seeing people out of context
- Live in the moment
- Possessive attachments to caregivers
- Difficulty awaiting turn (me first!)
- Adult vs. peer-oriented
- Relentless question-asking
- Need ongoing reassurance

DEVELOPMENTAL ASYNCHRONY

- disparity between intellectual and socio-emotional development
- described in highly gifted children; not well-researched in people with intellectual disabilities
- parallel phenomenon observed in people with Smith-Magenis syndrome
- significant contributor to maladaptive behaviors in SMS

Developmental Asynchrony Study

Research goal:

Develop a test battery to detect and measure developmental asynchrony

Measures:

Kaufman Adolescent & Adult Intelligence Test (KAIT):

- Crystallized intelligence: acquisition of facts and problem-solving ability using formal learning and experiences
- Fluid measures adaptability and flexibility when faced with new problems

BERS-2 (Behavioral & Emotional Rating Scale):

measures personal strengths of children

Reiss Profile: evaluates personality and motivation

Carey Temperament Scales: assess temperament, unique strengths, and needs of children at different ages

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

- relatively good fit between intellectual and emotional development in early childhood (preschool, K-2)
- increasing disparity in later childhood through adulthood
- emotional development grows at much slower pace
- by 3rd grade, increasing need to adapt education practices to meet both types of development

KEYS TO SUCCESS

- communication, staff training about developmental asynchrony
- acknowledging developmental asynchrony does NOT mean treating older individual with SMS like a young child
- individualized education / vocational / behavior plan should incorporate *relevant approaches* in early childhood education, even in older children and adults

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
APPROACH**

+

**AGE / IQ-APPROPRIATE GOALS
AND ACTIVITIES**

=

**SUCCESS FOR OLDER CHILDREN,
ADOLESCENTS, AND ADULTS!**

EARLY CHILDHOOD APPROACH

- use of visual cues and schedules
- “smorgasbord” of varied, high interest activities of relatively short (~20 minutes) duration
- mix of academic, functional, and recreational activities presented in a multi-sensory way
- emphasis on concrete, hands-on learning
- well-defined areas for different activities (cooking center, quiet area, free play area, etc.)
- individual attention; staff attuned to children’s emotions

EARLY CHILDHOOD APPROACH GROWN UP!

- use of day planner with post-its; computer-based schedule; email / phone reminders
- “smorgasbord” of school, work, volunteer, and recreational activities of relatively short duration
- emphasis on hands-on, functional aspects of curriculum / work schedule
- vary work / school activities throughout the day
- vary work / school environment throughout the day
- one-to-one support as needed

OBSERVATIONS

- Developmental asynchrony appears to be common in children and adults with SMS and significantly contributes to maladaptive behavior
- Emotional development progresses with age, but at a much slower rate than intellectual development in SMS
- The bigger the disparity between intellectual and emotional development, the greater the potential for maladaptive behavior
- Long periods of destabilized behavior further delay emotional growth
- Long periods of success, behavioral stability enhance emotional growth

OBSERVATIONS

- Professionals working with adolescents and adults generally not trained in early childhood special education approaches
- Emphasis on “normalization” philosophy in adult services ignores impact of unique SMS developmental profile on functioning and quality of life
- Individualized approach that combines appropriate early childhood practices with age / IQ appropriate goals often promotes success

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