

## EARLY INTERVENTION IN CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

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### **Abstract**

Regarding the way of dealing with autism, the paper focuses on the importance of early intervention in children affected. Throughout the paper we can see a description of how this intervention can be done, and the methods on how to have a successful intervention.

Autism is a neurological disorder that is rising drastically in the world and is characterised with absence of emotional connection, lack of communication and the most important stereotypical behaviour. The importance of the autism spectrum is its early detection, meaning that the sooner the identification is confirmed the earlier the treatment can begin and with much greater success in children.

One of the key concepts mentioned however is the treatment, regarding the fact that this is a huge component put into play and the importance of intervention focuses on having better forms and methods of treatment in this specific group.

What should be noted is that there are a few steps, that are described in further detail, in order to analyse and actually define these problems at a relatively earlier stage. In this regard, then we also discuss more on how to proceed after defining these specific problems. In conclusion, we recap the main concepts supported by various researches and furthermore give answers to the main question asked, on how to proceed and how to intervene successfully in a more efficient time.

***Keywords:** Autism, detection, treatment, methods.*

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### **Introduction**

Autism is a syndrome that is affecting a rather large number of people, and it is considered that an early intervention in children that are affected from this particular syndrome can be a key component of the health of the person in the long run. To be able to discuss about what actually the early intervention can do, we first must be able to actually identify what autism is and what does it actually stand for. According to the Oxford Dictionary, autism is referred to as “[a] developmental disorder of variable severity that is characterized by difficulty in social interaction and communication and by restricted or repetitive patterns of thought and behavior” (Oxford, 2018). With this particular definition stating precisely what autism is and what does it necessarily stand for, we can conduct a more in-depth analysis of autism and we can work on solutions or improvement of this particular syndrome.

### **Why is early intervention important?**

As we’ve stated earlier, it is a key component and we can say that it is of utmost significance to have the opportunity of diagnosing autism as early as possible. Nonetheless, in order to identify autism, we actually have to look for something into the specifics of it. The question that legitimately arises is when can we actually notice autism and when are we able to adapt to it and thus try to change it. “Autism appears to have its roots in very early brain development. However, the most obvious signs of autism and symptoms of autism tend to emerge between 2 and 3 years of age” (ASA, 2014). Therefore, according to this particular quote, we can see

that it is possible for us to detect autism which is being developed in children during their growth.

There have also been other forms of surveys that include people with autism and as such they've provided us with the fact that autism can be helped, and it doesn't necessarily need to be fought with different types of medicines or other forms; it can rather be cured through early intervention.

Nonetheless, in order for this to happen, this particular intervention has to be done as soon as possible, preferably even before the age of 2-3-years, as stated earlier on this paper. There have been studies that support the argument that an early intervention might also focus on eradicating the autism problem, and actually is working with this particular problem in order to come up with a solution, by not necessarily focusing on the problem, but rather on the solution itself. "At least one study suggests that about 14% of children with autism who undergo two intensive years of a program called the Early Start Denver Model will improve radically. In fact, those children would no longer qualify for autism diagnoses if they were being evaluated at a later age" (Rudy, 2018).

We then can clearly see that it is rather indispensable that the struggle against autism starts as early possible, as such action would give the autistic children the possibility of being cured from this syndrome and thus to not qualify for autism diagnosis when they get evaluated at a later date.

Since we have a clear understanding on fighting autism through early intervention methods, we also have to understand what sort of methods we should use in order for this fight to become more efficient and to contribute to the idea of eradicating autism from its roots rather than at a point when there is no possible way of eradicating it, due to a late intervention.

### **Methods of early intervention**

One of the methods used in order to comply with the early intervention is ABA therapy. To fully understand what ABA therapy is, we have to see what this abbreviation stands for and how is this particular therapy helping the children with autism. "Applied behavioral analysis (ABA) is a teaching method with developmental 'relationship-based' approaches. This approach was novel because it blended the rigor of ABA with play-based routines that focused on building a relationship with the child" (Nash, 2009).

From the aforementioned statement, we can see that it is rather necessary for ABA therapy to be implemented, since it is this particular therapy that meets the children needs. The idea behind ABA is to work together with the children by focusing on making them think that they're just playing a game, and as such, it creates a sort of relationship with the children, being able to also break barriers of communication.

To be able to fully understand what ABA does, we have to break it down into three categories. "Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a therapy based on the science of learning and behavior.

Behavior analysis helps us to understand:

How behavior works

How behavior is affected by the environment

How learning takes place" (AS, 2018)

From this point, we can clearly see that ABA focuses on the behavior of specific children, and can help in guiding the behavior from the environment that surrounds the children and the playful style of learning in order to better comply with the early intervention in children affected from autism.

Another method that can be used in order to help us fight autism is also the joint attention phase. “Joint attention, or the ability to shift social attention between people and objects, is another critical prelinguistic deficit in ASD (Alpern, 2012).

What actually joint attention focuses on, is the idea of helping those particular people in developing the abilities of shifting their focus from the object to a person, and have not only the focus, but also the emotional connection supporting this particular idea. This idea, not only helps fighting autism, but also creates a better understanding of the children’s mind abilities, given the fact that it teaches them how to particularly shift their attention from an object to a person, and see the emotional change that is associated with this particular shift of focus.

Furthermore, this particular method leads to the idea of combined emotional responses and as such can be used to better identify the stage of autism in the prelinguistic phase of a child. Thus, the early intervention can happen sooner than is happening now, as autism is identified only at later stages.

Another form of intervention is also the ESDM therapy. “The Early Start Denver Model (ESDM) is a behavioral therapy for children with autism between the ages of 12-48 months. It is based on the methods of applied behavior analysis (ABA)” (AS, 2018). What technically ESDM does is an early intervention, following the steps of ABA. However, as opposed to ABA, this particular therapy can be used on children ranging from one year to four years old, and as such, it can be more effective than the ABA therapy.

Furthermore, to be able to enhance our understanding on the Early Start Denver Model therapy, we have to see where this therapy mostly focuses on, and as such, how does this specific therapy help children evolve from their autistic behavior to a state where they are no longer defined as autistic, and as such, how does this specific therapy help us eradicate autism altogether.

ESDM therapy is “[b]ased on understanding of normal toddler learning and development  
Focused on building positive relationships  
Teaching occurs during natural play and everyday activities  
Uses play to encourage interaction and communication” (AS, 2014).

ESDM is basically a step-by-step guide in order to focus more precisely on the early intervention and better understand a toddler, by focusing mostly on enhancing the understanding on how a toddler’s brain works, in order to fight more efficiently autism. ESDM fights autism by better understanding of the toddlers, by building specific relationships, and as such, by being able to offer their teaching not only in special classes, but also in different environments. The key to this method is building a positive relationship and focusing on game-time with children, so that they do not feel confined in classes, but instead enjoy playing with those specific forms, which tend to encourage the interaction and communication in children.

To sum it up, we can state that the early intervention is actually a very adequate choice of helping the eradication of autism by diminishing the specific symptoms that cause someone to be diagnosed with autism. It is precisely early intervention that can help lower the number of people with autism.

As this paper suggests, there are different methods of intervention and different times of intervention. These specific interventions can happen anywhere between the ages of 12 to 48 months or even earlier. It is therefore emphasized that there are three forms of intervention that can actually help us with these problems, and they are fully elaborated above. One of them was the Applied Behavior Analysis or also known as the ABA therapy, and this particular form of therapy tends to intervene in the behavioral concepts of these particular children.

Another form that can be used is also the joint recognition, which tends to make those particular children develop feelings and differentiate those feelings between people and objects.

ESDM is also a form that has quite a significance, since it is this form that is specialized in early intervention and can only be applied to children with autism.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that the early intervention in children with autism is a must, in order to achieve the effect of diminishing the symptoms of autism. In this regard, we can state that the aforementioned methods can help us in our struggle against autism, and that early intervention might also be the key to this struggle, hence it is an indispensable approach to treating autism.

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