



Autistic Children on the Developmental Ladder

Children with autism find it difficult to master the following 6 fundamental development skills (according to Stanley Greenspan):

- › Simultaneously take interest in sights, sounds, sensations and calm oneself. (Normally, infants try to process what they see, hear, and feel and instinctively turn towards a pleasing face or soothing voice)
- › Engage in relationships with others
- › Be intimate—engage in life-long warm, trusting relationships
- › Create complex gestures, string together series of actions into a deliberate problem-solving sequence
- › Create ideas
- › Build bridges

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What Causes Behavior Modification?

- › Horseback riding empowers the child to change behavior towards the horse - instructor – actual lesson
- › Motivates, stimulates speech and language skills, non-verbal communication (desire to communicate with horse)
- › Achievement, using body skills; having an impact upon the horse
- › Cause and effect – if the child performs a task the horse responds
- › Trust - eye contact; at first with the horse and then with the environment
- › Self regulation, learning to adjust behavior to horse and later, to instructors needs
- › Self management and control
- › Sensory motor control
- › Sensory integration

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Why Children with Autism Accept the Horse

- › Horse provides a warm and trusting relationship that grows
- › Because they can accept horses into their private world
- › Child and horse interact both verbally and non-verbally
- › The horse's rhythmic movement arouses and relaxes the child
- › Releases fantasies, symbols and archetypes
- › The horse gives unconditional love
- › The riding center environment non-threatening

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Building an Individual Goal Plan

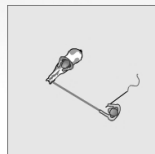
- › The goal plan may include 1+ of the following:
 - Goals
 - Relating to the human/horse world
 - Sensory motor
 - Communication
 - Social, emotional and behavioral, coping, play, self-help and socialization skills
 - Methodology - Therapeutic riding
- › Using 1+ of the following models:
 - Developmental – facilitate normal development
 - Learning
 - Sensory integration
 - Play

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Preparing for a Therapy Session: What's Needed

- › A well-trained horse, especially for verbal/non-verbal, good for the lunge
- › A lunge line, whip and equipment for lunging
- › Assigned instructor and helper, (volunteer)
- › If possible, an area of arena with little distraction, or time of the day when other riders and horses are less distracting
- › Type of arena that is in keeping with nature




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The Actual Therapy Session

- › The lesson is planned beforehand, volunteer and instructor make no attempt at eye contact - This is very difficult and must be practiced
- › Lesson with/without saddle, or soft saddle. Depends upon what is best for horse and child
- › At first, rider does not hold reins; horse is controlled by the instructor on lunge line with volunteer assistance attached to a lead
- › Volunteer walks or trots beside the horse from the outside


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Silent Therapy

- › Silent lessons begin at the walk; later to continue at pace determined by the child's arousal state.
- › Horse will only stop for antisocial behavior, rest, or request to perform a task
- › Controlled stops allow child to give appropriate gestures to move forward
- › Child learns gestures from instructor; starting with a nod of the head
- › Once child is responding to silent therapy, sounds may be introduced
- › **REWARD IS TO MOVE FORWARD**
- › In this therapy session the volunteer remains silent
- › Silent- clicking – body aids
- › Eye contact developing with the horse

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Communication and Cognitive skills


Child has the opportunity to develop relationships with horse

- › Lunge lessons need no eye contact, later child initiates
- › Child often fixates on horse and pleasure of rhythmic movement
- › Introduce human eye by adding a mirror; through play the child will look in the mirror
- › Lunge lessons include: stops---a simple task; repeat, colors, repetition, pictures (no adjectives used in request) communication, and cognitive skills

Child may engage in 2-way communication

- › Child, horse, instructor and volunteer, using ball game for interaction, inclusion, empowerment and control,
- › Develop peer relationships at appropriate developmental level
- › Develop visual language skills


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Introduction of Sound

- › Instructor/trainer introduces kisses or clicks to keep horse moving forward on the lunge
- › Replacing nod with click or kiss sound, child is encouraged to copy. Reward is that horse responds and moves on
- › Instructor uses click to start the horse moving again. These sounds will be imitated by the child– then horse will move on

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From Language Development to School

The child may develop and create complex gestures and speech

- › Language developed through a relationship with horse, riding activity and newly-acquired skills
- › Language; starts with single words, repetition
- › Instructor teach no more than 1-3 new words in first lessons
- › Lesson progress to short sentences
- › Allow child to go through echolalia, then to asking the question
- › Always begin each lesson by going back to beginning and starting learning process over again
- › Later, encourage them to initiate conversation through the riding activity

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From Language Development to School (cont.)


The child is exposed to new situations that create new ideas

- › Language develops from riding activities to games around the horse
- › Games with others- instructors and volunteers, horse, etc.
- › Continue with normal riding activity until time to hold reins
- › Conversation develops through talking and requesting participation
- › Repetition of any exercise or game leads to comprehension

The child may build bridges between ideas, making them reality-based & logical

- › Continue to encourage child to initiate new activities- ask him/her to demonstrate how to groom, or ask what kind of lesson they want that day.
- › At this point, child is ready to enter normal school

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Recap Lesson Progression

- › Silent therapy
- › Kisses or clicks, communication skills
- › Use of body or legs, motor skills, body awareness
- › Language skills
- › Use of the reins
- › Use of multiple non-verbal
- › Facial expression, body gestures to regulate social interaction
- › Repetition
- › Fine motor control
- › Gross motor control

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Developmental Therapy for the Very Young

- › Early intervention improves outcomes
- › Lack of relatedness- builds warm trusting relationships
- › Focus / keeping the rider in "our world"
- › Sensory input, processing, integration
- › Kinesthetic bodily skills
- › Action therapy / cause and effect
- › Cognitive skills
- › Exposure to new situations that create new ideas
- › Ability to develop and create complex gestures and speech
- › Two-way communication
- › Social, emotional, behavioral changes
- › Every child different/ every ride different. Teach person you have that day-- not what you think you should teach.
- › Non-threatening environment enables child to build bridges between ideas – reality based and logical

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Autism

PICTURE ›

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