

Expanding Horizons in Assent Based Practice: Six Areas You Might Be Missing

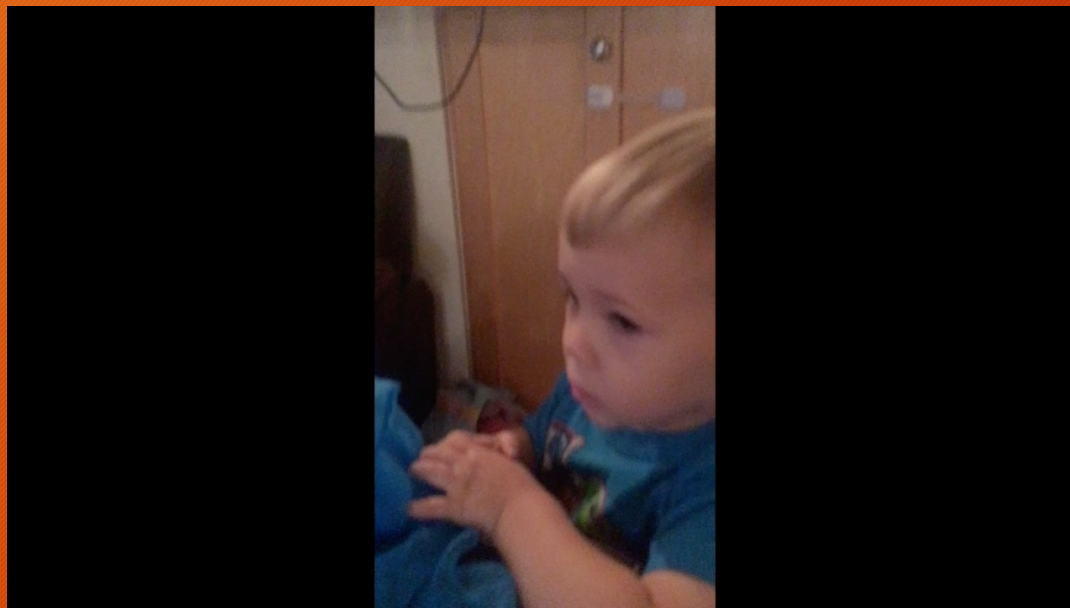
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Learning Objectives

- 1.The participant will be able to describe the transition from traditional to assent-based methodologies and their impact on behavior analytic practice.
- 2.The participant will be able to describe the six core areas fundamental to creating assent-based practice.
- 3.The participant will be able to explain the role emotional regulation plays in being able to create assent based practices.
- 4.The participant will be able to explain the role developing a connected relationship plays in implementing assent based practices.
- 5.The participant will be able to explain the role comprehensive assessment of escape behavior plays in the development of assent based practices

Video Discussion - Assent? Assent Withdrawal?



Defining Escape Maintained Behavior

Defining Escape Maintained Behavior

- Drop your definition in the chat
- Functional Definition: Escaping or avoiding a stimulus increases likelihood of target behavior occurring
- Topographically: When presented with an instruction or demand, client engages in challenging behavior such as crying, screaming, aggression, tantrums, etc

Escape Maintained Behavior - Some Thoughts

- Doesn't have to be “challenging”
- We all engage in responding to escape or avoid stimuli every day
- Responding often labeled “escape” without a comprehensive analysis
- Neuroscientific research suggests much of what we call “escape” and functionally analyze or try to treat by controlling consequences is tied to biological and physiological responses = distressed behavior

Current Research Trends

- The OG? - 7 Steps of Instructional Motivation (Schramm & Miller, 2012)
- Enhanced Choice Model (Rajamaran et al., 2022)
- Trauma Informed Applications (Rajamaran et al., 2022)
- PFA/SBT (Hanley and Colleagues)
- Kind Extinction (Tarbox et al., 2023)
- Trauma Informed Functional Assessment (Pollack et al., 2024)

TI-FBI Framework (Pollack et al., 2024) - Pillars

Pillar	Definition	Mastery Kit Areas
Build Healthy Relationships (9 Practices)	Build healthy relationships (i.e. responsive, safe, consistent) between the student and one or more adult or peer	Connected Relationships, Emotional Regulation, Big 4
Include Family or Incorporate Elements of Culture and/or Community (5 Practices)	Include the family in the development/implementation of intervention, or otherwise incorporate elements of their culture/community	Connected Relationships, Supports in the Environment
Prioritize Inter-professional Collaboration (5 Practices)	Prioritize inter-professional collaboration among providers representing different support domains	No specific areas but the kit is informed by related disciplines
Teach Skills (7 Practices)	Teach and/or strengthen core skills	All 6 areas!
Empowering Students through Voice and Choice (8 Practices)	Empower and promote autonomy by giving a voice and opportunities for choice	Connected Relationships, Emotional Regulation, Big 4, Executive Functioning
Ensure Safety (11 Practices)	Ensure a sense of safety by by minimizing or reducing potential sensors	The entire assessment and programming process

Areas to Assess - “Escape” Behavior - The Mastery Kit

- Connected Relationships
- Emotional Regulation
- Big 4 (Ala’i-Rosales et al, 2018)
- Executive Functioning
- Function-Based Treatment (Geiger et al, 2010)
- Environmental Supports

View a free sample of the mastery kit in the [Do Better Collective Free Resources](#)

Learn to assess and program for each of these areas and receive the full Mastery Kit in the [Reflective Analyst Course](#)

Behavioral Neuroscience

BUT FIRST.....

3rd Wave of Behaviorism (Hayes, 2004)

- More holistic view: consider internal processes in how we understand behavior
- Context matters
- Importance of therapeutic relationship and acceptance of one's experience

Beyond Behaviors (Delahooke)

- Developmental and Behavioral Neuroscientific understanding of behavior
- Co-regulation
- Cues of Safety
- Emphasis on supporting emotional and physiological regulation
- Aligns with behavior analysis:
 - Behavior as communication
 - Importance of environment → cues of safety
 - Functional behavior assessment
 - Interventions focused on support

Polyvagal Theory (Porges)

- Multidisciplinary
- Empirically supported
- Connection between autonomic nervous system and social/emotional development
- 3 Distinct physiological states regulated by the autonomic nervous system
 - Ventral Vagal State (social engagement and feelings of safety)
 - Sympathetic State (fight or flight responses)
 - Dorsal Vagal State (shutdown and disconnection)
- Alignment with behavior analysis:
 - Behavior as a function of biological states
 - Importance of context
 - Interventions aimed at changing behavior

Neurosequential Model (Perry)

- Neuroscience, developmental psychology, and psychiatry
- Understand the impact of development and experience on behavior and social/emotional development
 - Early experiences can alter development of neural networks
- Use information gathered to design interventions focused on the nervous system and developmental level
 - Focus is on physiological first then higher-order cognitive and social functions
- Alignment with behavior analysis:
 - Behavior as a function of history and context
 - Importance of assessment
 - Tailored interventions
 - Sequential Approach

Self Regulation Theory (Shanker)

- Research relating to how individuals respond to stress, how stress affects behavior, and how people can learn to better regulate responses to stress
- Individual Responses to stress
 - "Misbehavior" or a stress response?
- Impact of stress on behavior
 - Significant impacts on behavior
 - Can impair adaptive coping mechanisms
- Regulating responses to stress
 - 5 Domains: biological, emotion, cognitive, social, and prosocial)
 - Improve self-regulation → reduce unnecessary stressors, teaching coping skills, foster relationships that provide support and co-regulation

Self Regulation Theory (Shanker)

- Alignment with behavior analysis
 - Behavior as Function of the Environment
 - Individualized assessment and intervention
 - Teaching adaptive skills

Connected Relationships

Additional Training

[The Heart of ABA Service Delivery: Creating Connected Relationships](#) (Included with Membership)

[Effectively Developing Reinforcers, Play, and Leisure Skills](#) (Included with Membership)

[Connecting with Children During Difficult Moments: Tools for Honoring Assent and Assent Withdrawal](#) (Included with Membership)

Why Connected Relationships?

- Research on Social Communication and Active Engagement
- Research on Therapeutic Alliance
- Clinical Expertise

Connected Relationships Overview

- How Connected is the client to others and the environment?
 - Awareness of their environment
 - Awareness of people
 - Pre-communication skills
 - Communicative intent and communication partners
 - Initiation
 - Sharing an agenda
- If a connected and trusting relationship does not exist, prioritize this area

3 Steps for Creating a Connected Relationship

- Observe and Join
- Imitate and Expand
- Wait, Watch, and Respond



Observe and Join

- Preferences and stressors
- Join without expectation
- Parallel play



Imitate and Expand

- Imitate their actions and vocalizations
- Expand and build variation
- Use simple, clear language



Wait, Watch, and Respond

- Be Patient
- Watch for communication cues
- Respond to their initiations



Emotional Regulation

Additional Training

[The Hidden Link: A Behavior Analyst's Guide to Emotional Regulation](#)

[Connecting with Children During Difficult Moments: Tools for Honoring Assent and Assent Withdrawal \(Included with Membership\)](#)

[Addressing the Behavior Cusp Skills of Tolerating Routines Related to Health and Safety and Environmental Aversives \(Included with Membership\)](#)

What is the Opposite of "Escape" / Assent
Withdrawal?

Active Engagement

Measure of Active Engagement (Wetherby et al., 2018)

- Purpose: to measure parent-child interaction in the natural environment
- Operationally defined Active Engagement into 8 components:
 - Regulation
 - Productivity
 - Social Connected
 - Looking at Faces
 - Responding to voices/words
 - Communicating directly
 - Being Flexible
 - Generating New Ideas

Well Regulated - Coding from MAE (Wetherby et al., 2018)

- 0 = Child's emotional state interferes with availability for interaction and learning the majority of the time. Child does not actively use strategies to manage emotions
- 1 = Child is available to interact and learn some of the time. Child may have many brief moments of dysregulation or more than one longer episode but shows at least two moments of actively trying to manage their emotions.
- 2 = Child is available to interact and learn the majority of the time despite brief moments of dysregulation. Child may have some brief moments and no more than one longer episode. Child shows at least three moments of actively trying to manage their emotions.
- 3 = Child is able to regulate and actively manage emotions and remain readily available for learning and interaction most of the time, with no more than three brief moments of dysregulation (10 s or less).

Emotional Regulation

- How well can the client manage their emotions to navigate various situations within the environment?
 - Physiological
 - Respondent/Habitual responding
 - Thought/Action
- If a client's emotional regulation skills are weak, prioritize this area

Big 4 Preventative Measures

Why the Big 4?

- Development of these skills lowers the probability of challenging behavior
- Understanding these skills should inform the need for function-based treatment

The Big 4

Ala'i-Rosales et. Al., 2018



Communication



Gaining attention and affection



Engagement in activities



Tolerating, coping with, and accommodating adversity

Communication - Dr. Megan's Thoughts

- Observe preferred method of communication
- Honor and affirm THIS communication
- Stop putting the responsibility solely on the client

Gaining Attention and Affection - Dr. Megan's Thoughts

- Co-regulation --> ties in with emotional regulation
- Similar to communication
- Focus on safe initiations

Engagement in Activities - Dr. Megan's Thoughts

- Overly structured days = limited opportunity to learn safe “free time” engagement
- Based on their preferences and safety
- Explicitly teach how to engage in activities and spend “free time”

Tolerating, Coping with, and Navigating Adversity - Dr. Megan's Thoughts

- Service delivery focuses more on “tolerating” than in the past
- Stopping at “tolerating” can set up for failure → never learn how to move through hard things
- Need to develop skills for coping and self-advocacy

Executive Functioning Skills

A Behavioral Perspective

- Repertoire of learned behaviors and their modifications through environmental interactions, which enable an individual to engage in goal-directed activities
- Assess each of the skills, explicitly teach them, and shape their development as we do any other skill

Executive Functioning Skills

- Response inhibition
- Working memory
- Emotional control
- Sustained attention
- Task initiation
- Planning/prioritizing
- Organization
- Time management
- Goal directed persistence
- Flexibility
- Metacognition
- Stress tolerance

Executive Functioning - Relation to Escape?

Skill	Description	Escape?
Sustained Attention	Maintaining attention to a situation or task in spite of distractibility, fatigue, or waning interest. Examples: completing tasks such as chores or homework	May preemptively avoid tasks requiring prolonged focus or escape from tasks due to frustration or difficulty in maintaining attention
Task Initiation	Initiating a task or project in an efficient or timely fashion (a short response latency). Task initiation involves a set of actions facilitated by and responsive to various environmental cues and contingencies. Example: Starting a task right after an instruction is given.	May procrastinate or choose simpler, more enjoyable activities over challenging tasks. This avoidance is negatively reinforcing, as it temporarily alleviates the discomfort associated with beginning a task, but it can exacerbate stress and undermine self-efficacy over time. May also resist transitions from ongoing activities to new tasks.
Planning Prioritizing	Organizing and sequencing actions towards achieving a specific goal. Examples: making lists, setting goals, and allocating resources (time, effort) based on priority levels.	May feel overwhelmed by tasks and unable to determine where to start. This can result in the avoidance of complex tasks and a tendency to abandon tasks that are started without a clear plan. May prefer activities offering immediate gratification, reinforcing avoidance behaviors for complex tasks

Function-Based Treatments

ADDITIONAL TRAINING:

Unlocking the Potential of Active Engagement: Research findings and implications for practice (Included with Membership)

Navigate Challenging Behavior Better (Included with Membership)

Shaping, Shaping, Shaping, Always Shaping (Included with Membership)

Cultivating Curious and Compassionate Behavior Analysts

Building a Foundation for Effective and Ethical Treatment of Interfering Behavior (Included with Membership)

Teaching From Joy: Applying PFA Across Treatment Settings (Included with Membership)

PFA and SBT: Treatment Overview, Common Pitfalls, and Tips for successful implementation (Included with Membership)

The Ethical Range of Extinction with Steve Ward (Included with Membership)

Why Function Based Treatment?

- If the “escape” behavior is maintained by consequences that can be altered within the environment, and an individualized plan is developed for the client, then function-based treatment increases the likelihood of effectiveness for the client.

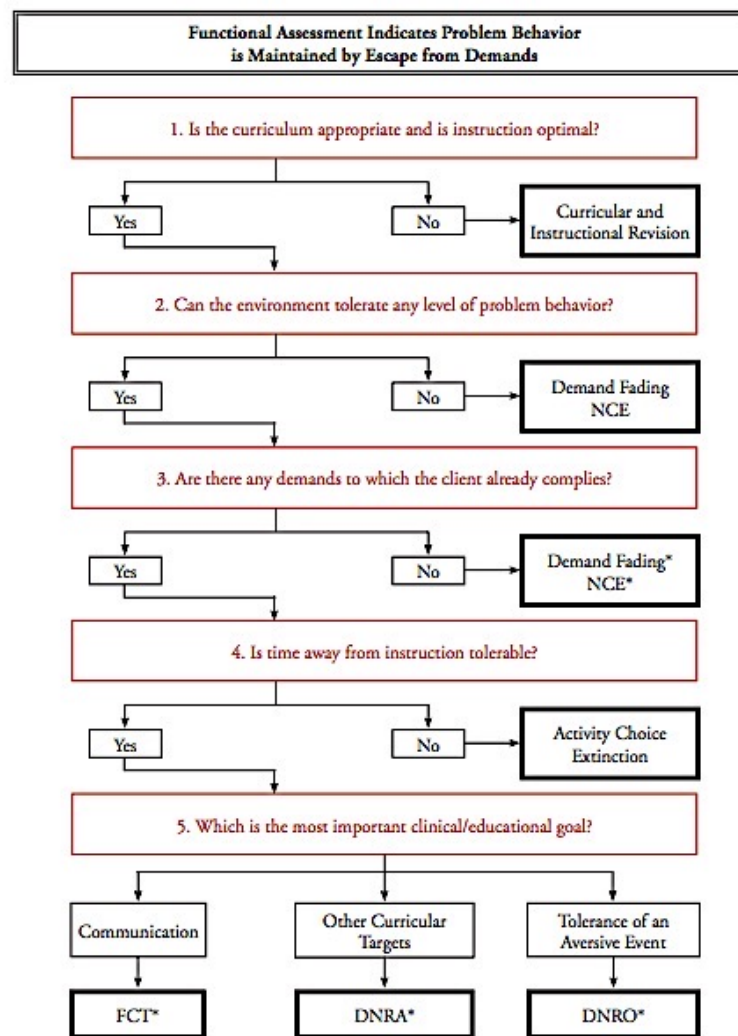
Function-Based Treatments (Geiger et al, 2010)

1. Activity Choice
2. Curricular and Instructional Revision
3. Demand Fading
4. Differential Reinforcement - DNRA
5. FCT - DNRA
6. DNRO
7. Escape Extinction
8. Non-Contingent Escape

Table. Strengths and potential limitations of treatments for escape-maintained problem behavior.

Treatment	Description	Strengths	Potential Limitations
Activity Choice	Offer a choice among selected tasks	• Might prevent problem behavior • No lost instruction time • Provides choice-making opportunities • Increased compliance	• No programmed consequence for problem behavior • Requires preparation of additional instructional materials • Requires choice-making skills • Requires an appropriate curriculum be in place • Requires learners who can tolerate some instruction
Curricular and Instructional Revision	Change curricular targets or instructional procedures	• Results in improvements in teaching • Might benefit other learners in the environment • Might produce more efficient and effective skill acquisition • Might prevent problem behavior	• Requires time, effort, and expertise to change curriculum/instruction • No programmed consequence for problem behavior
Demand Fading	Remove all demands, then gradually reintroduce them over time; include escape extinction	• Immediately reduces problem behavior • The first step of the intervention (demand removal) is often already done • Might prevent problem behavior • Might increase tolerance of instruction • A good match for dangerous behavior and large clients	• Gradually fading in demands might be logically difficult • Requires expertise to establish and oversee the fading process • Periods of non-instruction could be disruptive to classroom activities
Differential Negative Reinforcement of Alternative Behavior	Provide a break from work after a new, alternative behavior and place the problem behavior on extinction (see text for other variations)	• Actively targets new skills or increases existing ones • Provides continued access to escape throughout the intervention • May be used without extinction	• Periods of non-instruction could be disruptive to classroom activities • Requires expertise to establish and oversee schedule thinning process
Differential Negative Reinforcement of Zero Rates of Behavior	Provide a break from work if the problem behavior has not occurred for a specified amount of time and place the problem behavior on extinction	• Provides continued access to escape throughout the intervention • Useful for increasing tolerance of necessary, but aversive, stimuli	• Requires constant monitoring for occurrences of problem behavior • Periods of non-instruction could be disruptive to classroom activities • Requires expertise to establish and oversee schedule thinning process
Extinction	Do not provide a break from work contingent on problem behavior; continue presenting the task regardless of problem behavior	• Provides a contingency for problem behavior • Compatible with other treatments to enhance their effectiveness	• High response effort of implementation • Might produce a response burst or aggression • Might make behavior more resistant to extinction without strong treatment integrity • Does not result in immediate response suppression
Functional Communication Training	Provide a break from work for a new, communicative response and place the problem behavior on extinction (or punishment)	• Actively targets new skills or increases existing ones • Provides continued access to escape throughout the intervention • Preferred by some individuals over NCE and extinction • May be used without extinction	• May result in high rates of the communicative response • Does not result in immediate response suppression • Periods of non-instruction could be disruptive to classroom activities • Requires expertise to establish and oversee schedule thinning process
Noncontingent Escape	Provide breaks from work on a time-based schedule, irrespective of problem behavior	• Provides continued access to escape throughout the intervention • Immediately reduces problem behavior • Might prevent problem behavior • May be used without extinction	• May produce adventitious reinforcement of problem behavior • Periods of non-instruction could be disruptive to classroom activities • Requires expertise to establish and oversee schedule thinning process

Geiger et al. (2010)



*Figure. A model for selecting function-based treatments for escape-maintained problem behavior. Note: *Consider including extinction if viable; DNRA = differential negative reinforcement of alternative behavior, DNRO = differential negative reinforcement of zero rates of behavior, FCT = functional communication training, NCE = noncontingent escape.*

Geiger et al. (2010)

Supports in the Environment

ADDITIONAL TRAINING:

Beyond the Basics: Innovative Instructional Practices for Supportive Learning (Included with Membership)

Best Practices in Behavioral Skills Training, Functional Communication Training, and Demand Fading (Included with Membership)

Rediscover Your Roots: Putting the Analysis Back in Behavior Analysis. Part 1: Barriers to Learning (Included with Membership)

Transactional Supports from SCERTS (Prizant et al., 2006)

Social Communication Emotional Regulation Transactional Supports

1. Active role of child in learning → partners must respond flexibly and supportively
2. All people are important facilitators of development
3. Expand from enhancing child's abilities to focusing on growth-inducing interactions that support the child's developmental capacities
4. Learning supports are identified that support the child's strengths and address challenges
5. Transactional supports are flexible and responsive to changing needs and they should be used in a way that is relevant and creates confidence and competence in the use of the supports for both child and parent/team.

Transactional Supports Domains

1. Interpersonal support
2. Learning support
3. Supports to families
4. Support among professionals

Prizant et al. (2006)

Transactional Support Summary Form

- **Interpersonal Support**

- Partner is responsive to child
- Partner fosters initiation
- Partner respects child's independence
- Partner sets stage for engagement
- Partner provides developmental support
- Partner adjusts language input
- Partner models appropriate behaviors

- **Learning Support**

- Partner structures activity for active participation
- Partner uses augmentative system to foster development
- Partner uses visual and organizational support
- Partner modifies goals, activities, and learning environment

Prizant et al. (2006)

Supports in the environment



NCR



Visual schedules



Priming



Token Boards



Visual Behavior Expectations



Reinforcement Schedules



Scheduled Practice



Explicit Instruction

Assessment, Programming, and Implementation

Additional Training:

The Reflective Analyst: Navigating Escape Behaviors with the Trauma-Informed Assent
Mastery Kit for Escape Behaviors

Tying it All Together

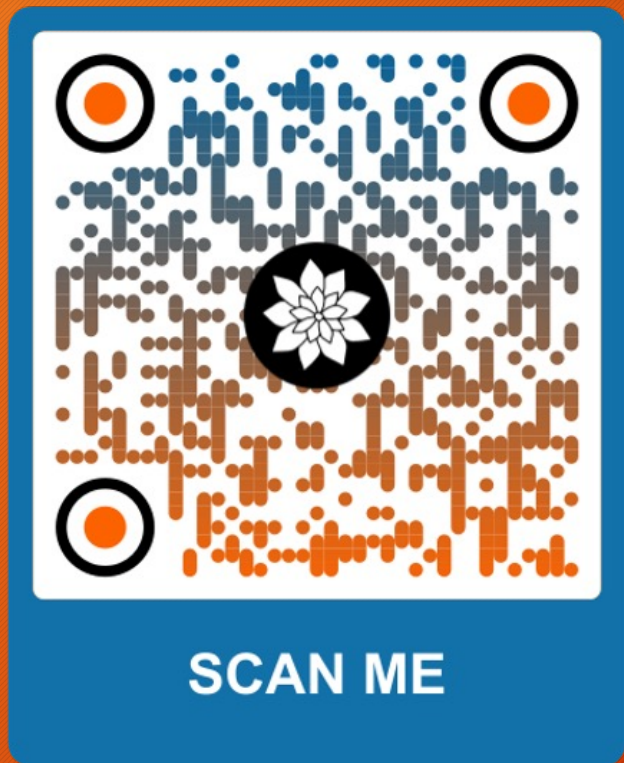
- Revise assessment, programming, and training processes to incorporate these 6 areas
- Near impossible to truly provide assent based intervention if any of these areas are ignored

Contact Information

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Mastery Kit Sample



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Google Doc Resources

- [Social Emotional Resources](#)
- [Escape Behavior Resources](#)
- [Listening and Uplifting Autistic Voices](#)

Instructional Motivation - Resources

- YouTube Videos from Do Better
www.youtube.com/c/dobetter
- YouTube Videos from Robert Schramm
www.youtube.com/user/knospeaba
 - Examples of implementation
 - Robert presenting on the topic
- Ethical Alternatives to Traditional Escape Extinction
 - Webinar
www.collective.dobettermovement.us
- Steve Ward Article: Task as Reinforcer Article in BAP
- 7 Steps PDF by Robert Schramm
- 7 Steps Training Packet
 - Found in the book 7 Steps to Earning Instructional Control

Relevant Podcast Episodes

- #dobetter Podcast
 - [The Great Debate PFA vs FA](#)
 - [Learned Behavior During Extinction](#)
 - [Interview with Paula Chan Self-Advocacy](#)
 - [Interview with Robert Schramm 7 Steps Part 1](#)
 - [Interview with Robert Schramm 7 Steps Part 2](#)
 - [Interview with Celia Heyman PFA](#)
- [Autism Helper](#)
- [Mindful Literacy](#)
- [Functional Relations](#)
- [Turn Autism Around](#)
- [Why We Do What We Do](#)
- [Behavioral Observations](#)

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