

Developmentally-based Techniques

These types of therapies have three main components: encouraging the development of social and emotional relationships, allowing social engagement to be led by the child, and using play activities rather than more directive methods to teach deficits in learning. Recent research has shown these approaches to be very effective for children with autism.

Therapies with a developmentally-based focus work on social and communication skills as well as emotional engagement. Therapists and parents utilizing these techniques use the child's own interests to achieve progress in the areas mentioned above. The goal is to slowly build emotional engagement, social interaction, and communication. It is thought that other deficit areas (e.g., language, abstract reasoning, and repetitive behaviours) will automatically improve if social skills and emotional engagement are addressed. Developmental therapies also place a great deal of emphasis on family involvement.

DIR/Floortime is a developmentally based intervention designed to build strong foundations in social, emotional and intellectual functioning. DIR stands for Developmental, Individual differences, and Relationship based. One of the techniques used in this intervention is Floortime therapy, a method which lets the child lead therapy, while still challenging them to develop skills in the aforementioned areas. Originally meant to take place on the floor, Floortime can now be incorporated into conversations with the child and to other environments. In addition to Floortime, DIR also emphasizes the use of other types of therapies as per the child needs. These include OT, speech therapy, and educational training.