



Dear VAPT members,

This enote spotlights information on the use of the **DIR FLOORTIME** model with **children with autism**. As the capacity for self-regulation develops in the context of a caring relationship, it is increasingly important that children are given the opportunity to develop this core competency.



SAVE the DATE
June 14 and 15, 2013

Our summer COME PLAY WITH US!! Conference will focus on a treatment model and interventions for working with children with autism and sensory and regulatory challenges. Save the date for **JUNE 14 and 15** for in-depth training at JMU with presenter **Dr. Esther Hess** on Stanley Greenspan's remarkable **DIR FLOORTIME**!

EVIDENCE BASE for DIR FLOORTIME

A recent study by Casenhiser, Shanker, & Stieben, called *Learning through Interaction in Children With Autism: Preliminary Data from a Social-Communication-Based Intervention* contains information on this complex disorder. The study evaluates the **DIR FLOORTIME** model, a social-communication-based approach to autism intervention. Our VAPT summer conference speaker, Dr. Esther Hess, is a leader in this approach and trained with the originator of **DIR FLOORTIME**, Dr. Stanley Greenspan.

The aim of the study using DIR FLOORTIME was to improve the social interaction skills of children with autism spectrum disorder. Families in the treatment group were given 2 hours of therapy and coaching each week in an intervention emphasizing social-interaction and the parent-child relationship.

After 12 months, results suggest that children in the **DIR FLOORTIME** treatment group made significantly greater gains in social interaction skills. Initiation of joint attention, involvement, and severity of language delay were found to be significantly associated with improvement of language skills in children with autism. Finally, caregiver skills targeted by the intervention were found to be significantly associated with changes in children's interaction skills. This finding corresponds with the findings on the effectiveness of filial play therapy.

Casenhiser, D., Shanker, S. & Stieben, J. (2013). Learning through interaction in children with autism: Preliminary data from asocial-communication-based intervention. *Autism*, 17, 220-241.



DIR AS A PLAY-BASED INTERVENTION

View an **exciting video news report** of the work at York University regarding the use of DIR FLOORTIME as a play-based intervention for children with autism at <http://www.mehri.ca/News.html>

Researchers at York University in Toronto carried out the first study using measures from neuroscience and behavior for a play-based therapy program that has had some remarkable success in drawing some autistic children out of their solitary worlds and into a shared one. In the video, the CBC's Ioanna Roumeliotis offers a moving look inside FLOORTIME therapy... and how it's given one Ontario family new hope for their son.

A non-technical write up of the work can be read at Roumeliotis, I. (2012, April 6). [Can autistic kids be helped by a play-based program?](#) *CBC News: The National*.

DIR/FLOORTIME AND ASD

An Innovative Approach to Working with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Definition of DIR/Floortime: The **D**evelopmental, **I**ndividual Difference, **R**elationship-based model enables clinicians, parents and educators to construct a comprehensive assessment and intervention program. DIR brings the child into a shared world allowing for interaction with the child for social, emotional, and intellectual development. The profile includes understanding the child's emotional, social, and intellectual



level; individual differences in motor, sensory, and language functioning; and the existing caregiver, child and family functioning and interaction patterns.

Built on years of research, the DIR/Floortime Model also integrates research contributions from various disciplines, such as **early childhood education, special education, speech and language pathology, occupational therapy, social work and family therapy.**

Neuroscience research lends further support to developmental interventions. Early relationships and reciprocal interactions between infants and caregivers are vital for healthy brain development.

The objectives of the DIR/Floortime Model are to build spontaneous communication between children and their caregivers and nurturing interactions. These two elements are basic components of the DIR/Floortime



Model. **For more information about the approach, go to the Interdisciplinary Council on Developmental & Learning Disorders, ICDL , website at www.icdl.com**

VAPT Floortime 101

<http://www.icdl.com/DIRFloortime.shtml>

“How does a child develop the miraculous abilities to love, think, communicate, and create, as well as to have self-control and feel compassion for others? Many child-development theories focus on only one part of this puzzle, such as a child’s genes, cognitive skills, or a new way to set limits. But in fact what gives meaning to all parts of this puzzle and defines your child as a humane and intelligent human being is his continuing relationship with you.”

The Floortime Approach is an intervention system developed by the late Dr. Stanley Greenspan. Floortime meets children where they are and builds upon their strengths and abilities through creating a warm relationship and attuned interactions. You may read an interesting document that provides an overview of the research findings (from 2010 and earlier) and a description of the fundamental dimensions of the model at <http://www.icdl.com/dirFloortime/research/documents/DIRFloortimeOverviewandSummaryofSupport-NOV2010.pdf>

For additional information please visit: <http://www.stanleygreenspan.com/about-floortime/>.

VAPT CHAPTERS

Are you active in your area VAPT Chapter? Are you looking for ways to find out more about play therapy and connect with play therapists in your area? Well, VAPT has regional chapters around Virginia to bring play therapy resources and networking opportunities to your area. All our VAPT sponsored trainings that award CE’s are posted on the national APT site--look under the directory for finding play therapy training and select Virginia! You may also contact your local Chapter Chair to find out more about what’s happening in your area and around the state. If there is not a chapter listed that is close to you, please consider volunteering to serve in your area. Contact a chair close to you and offer mutual support to a playmate!

Chapters and Chapter Chairs

Central Virginia VAPT Chairperson Amy Kale Fraites play@mail.planetcomm.net

Harrisonburg VAPT - Chairperson Debbie Sturm sturmdc@jmu.edu

Forest VAPT Chairperson Norma White norma.white@couplestandkids.com

Fairfax VAPT Chairperson Sheri Mitschelen shmitsch@verizon.net

Gainesville VAPT Chairperson Cathi Spooner cspooner@phoenixfamilycounseling.com

Richmond VAPT Chairperson Jan Williamson jlwilliamson@mindspring.com

Roanoke VAPT Chairperson Mary Lugar mslugar@gmail.com

Rockbridge Area VAPT Chairperson Katie Masey kmasey@racs.org

Southwest VAPT Chairpersons Donna Callis and Teresa Viers

dcallis@CACBWCV.ORG and tviers@highlandscsb.org

Chairperson Sydney Peltier speltier@highlandscsb.org

Tidewater VAPT Chairpersons Kathrinn Hartman and Shawn Ware Avant

hartmak@evms.edu and Shawn.Ware-Avant@theupcenter.org