FEATURES OF THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

**Svetlana V. Lezhenina^{1*}, Nadezhda V. Shuvalova², Antonina A.
Sapozhnikova³, Svetlana Yu. Gladysheva⁴, Nadezhda B. Efeikina⁵, Iraida M.
Diachkova⁶**

¹Assoc. Prof., Chuvash State University, RUSSIA, svl-8@bk.ru

²Prof, Chuvash State Pedagogical University, RUSSIA, msta77@yandex.ru

³Prof, Chuvash State University, RUSSIA, ssl_8@bk.ru

⁴Assoc. Prof., Chuvash State University, RUSSIA, kuez-study@bk.ru

⁵Assoc. Prof., Chuvash State University, RUSSIA, denisova-885@bk.ru

⁶Assoc. Prof., Chuvash State University, RUSSIA, fdorovna@bk.ru

*Corresponding Author

Abstract

The article considers the communication problems of children with autism spectrum disorders through the prism of the social environment in which these children find themselves. Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are an urgent problem that concerns specialists in various specialties, such as teachers, doctors, psychologists. It is worth noting the increased public interest in this problem. Difficulties in contact with other people, especially with peers, constitute one of the most difficult and most significant problems for children with ASD. The first communication problem of children with ASD is that the child cannot conduct a dialogue. The second communication problem in children with ASD is poor orientation in feedback from a communication partner. The third problem is social satiety. The fourth problem is catastrophically low stress resistance. The aim of the research is to analyze the characteristics of the social environment in which children with autism spectrum disorders should develop. Materials and research methods: literary-analytical and generalizing. The article provides examples of a developing environment: for example, a club for television interests, literary, as well as travel. The authors of the article believe that children with ASD need to alternate their developmental environment with a comfortable environment. Below are examples of using development environments. The authors of the article concluded that the peculiarities of the social environment for a child with ASD include, firstly, that it should be developmental. Secondly, this developmental environment should alternate with a comfortable one. Thirdly, in this environment, all activities must clearly correspond to the child's age and individual capabilities. Fourthly, these facts must be taken into account when preparing teachers who will work with children with ASD. Teachers will have to be able to conduct not only school classes, but also various club activities of interest. The article also provides examples of development environments.

Keywords: Autism spectrum disorders, features, social environment, children, teachers, examples of developing environments.

1 INTRODUCTION

Autism spectrum disorders are an urgent problem that concerns specialists in various specialties, such as teachers, doctors, psychologists. It is worth noting the increased public interest in this problem. Difficulty in contact with other people, especially with peers, is one of the most difficult and most significant problems for children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) (Ermolaev, Zakharova, 2006, pp. 9-33; Kostin, 2015; Kostin, 2018).

The aim of the research is to analyze the characteristics of the social environment in which children with autism spectrum disorders should develop.

Materials and research methods: literary and analytical (the scientific literature of domestic and foreign authors on this issue was analyzed) and generalizing (this method made it possible to draw conclusions).

2 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first communication problem of children with ASD is that the child cannot conduct a dialogue: there is insufficient consideration of the interlocutor's desires, his readiness to communicate (this is due to the difficulties of empathic feeling in another person); there is no readiness to follow the elementary order of listening and speaking; insufficient understanding of unwritten laws (Nikolskaya, Baenskaya, 2014; Nikolskaya, Vedenina, 2014).

The second communication problem in children with ASD is that the poor orientation in feedback from a communication partner determines the monologue of autistic people, which is a specific manifestation of their wider and fundamental inability to flexibly take into account novelty in the environment and change their own behavior in accordance with external changes. An autistic person is too affectively captured by his own experiences, interests; this creates in the interlocutor a feeling of being programmed, initial preoccupation, and lack of spontaneity and flexibility of his behavior.

The third problem is social satiety. An autistic child (teenager, adult) can approach the interlocutor, throw one or two remarks and walk away, repeating this procedure many times (even in communication with a person whom he trusts and with whom a strong psychological connection has been established). In the case of a group communicative situation, satiety can look like multiple exits of the participant, for example, from the table and return to the general circle (we emphasize once again that this is a characteristic behavior in psychologically comfortable conditions).

The fourth problem is catastrophically low stress resistance. Any surprise, difficulty, nuisance, personal failure can cause at least a state of confusion and passive expectation of external help, in the worst case - provoke fear, impulsive aggressive action (Bolte, Hallmayer, 2011).

All this makes spontaneous communication of an autistic child with peers very difficult to access, at least – sharply limits his possibilities. However, in order to advance in development, any child of school age, including those with autism, must have a certain experience of being in a formal children's group (class, circle, etc.). Despite the complexity of performing a group role, it is only when in a real group or social environment that a child gets an impetus in the development of arbitrariness, self-control, flexibility, and the complication of forms of communication.

What should this environment be like? Environments are divided into stressful, comfortable and developmental (Lebedinskaya, 1991; Lebedinsky, 1990).

Stressful environment is an environment in which a child with ASD is under too much stress. He himself cannot cope with this tension. Such stress does not push the child towards development, but depletes his strength, which in the end is fraught with not only a lack of progress, but can also lead to regression.

Comfortable environment is a relaxing environment, in which the child does what he wants. Unfortunately, such an environment is not conducive to development, although the very presence of comfortable environments allows a person to rest and recuperate.

Developmental environment. Tension is created in this environment, but it has a developmental effect, in which tension is created, but this tension has a developmental effect. It is an environment in which an adult interested in the child tries to dose the degree of this tension and help the child to cope with it.

When the social environment of children with ASD is filled with stable and emotionally rich meanings, the danger that must be kept in mind all the time decreases: the danger of a decrease in his activity, negative dynamics in the volitional sphere. Therefore, we consider it extremely undesirable to isolate such children,

narrowing the scope of his contacts and those daily activities that they habitually perform (and this can happen, for example, after leaving school). It is important that by adolescence a person with ASD has developed some kind of personal emotional relationship outside the immediate microsocial circle (Nikolskaya, 1997; Obukhova, 1995). In order to maintain their psycho-emotional state and communication skills, children with ASD need to attend various hobby groups and clubs. Such children need to be in society as much as possible, in a developmental environment. Examples of such developmental environments are hobby clubs, such as a television hobby club, a literary hobby club, and a travel club. The authors of the article believe that children with ASD need to alternate their developmental environment with a comfortable environment. Below are examples of using development environments.

Television impressions. It is possible to unite children with ASD in circles, clubs, where various TV programs watched can be discussed. Impressions from what you see can serve as a basis for group discussion and comparison as any other. It should be noted that in such a group work one cannot proceed only from dividing interests into “high” and “low” in terms of artistic level.

It is unlikely that even an authoritative adult can easily dissuade an autistic person from watching programs “unnecessary” to him. In this case, it is better to try to understand what exactly attracts in the program, what kind of impressions are obtained from it. Moreover, this can already serve as a basis for dialogue, comparison of impressions, that is, to work for unification, and not for separation.

Literature and art. Means of culture traditionally occupy the most important place both in the rehabilitation of special children and in upbringing in general. Therefore, books, music, art, etc. addictions are one of the favorite and cultivated topics of club conversations. Their discussion takes place in the main in the same form of comparing impressions and interests, forming a wonderful basis for the development of dialogical communication. Such a comparison – “what who likes” – allows you to find and enjoy points of contact, share experiences and impressions, create a “bank” of common, shared by many impressions.

Travelling. It is known that travelling to other parts of the world in various cultures was given great importance, and they represented an irreplaceable step in socialization, especially for people of adolescence. In the stories of children who have been somewhere (in this case, it does not matter whether it is a long journey or not), there is always a mass of valuable material. These are, for example, the difficulties and inconveniences that had to be overcome while travelling; impressions of architecture, nature, lifestyle of people in other places; a unique feeling of returning home, etc. In addition, stories about the roads tend to emotionally lure other participants, serve as a good basis for comparison of impressions and dialogue.

It is very important that the club remains a place not only for specially organized communication at the table with a teacher, but also for spontaneous interaction of participants with each other – a place where you can simply share news, ask others about their news, etc. This interaction, which is constantly happening in meetings, is extremely valuable, although it may seem pretentious and strange to the eyes of an outsider (Osorina, 1999).

At the same time, for some members of the group, communication is still directed exclusively at teachers, and not at other children; in this regard, another facet of teachers’ work is to stimulate the participants’ interest in each other, to help them establish a dialogue with each other. There is also a difficulty that needs to be noted, which is specific to autism: some people with ASD have a very poor memory of faces, which further complicates their dialogue. Therefore, perhaps someone will need special help in memorizing group mates by name and in person (Frith, 1989).

What is the specificity of such a developing social environment that truly stimulates the activity, emotional-volitional and social development of an autistic person? It can be confidently asserted that such an environment should be based on personal, emotionally warm relationships with other people and on some kind of joint meaningful activity. Moreover, these activities should be strictly age-appropriate, that is, they should be correlated with those activities that are typical for peers without developmental disabilities. Therefore, it can be certain types of creativity, educational and labor activities. It is equally important for parents to develop skills for the development of everyday adaptation and independence in children with ASD. It will be a comfortable environment for them.

3 CONCLUSION

Having analyzed the scientific literature on this issue, the authors of the article came to the conclusion that the peculiarities of the social environment for a child with autism spectrum disorders should be that, firstly, it should be developmental. Secondly, this developmental environment should alternate with a comfortable one. Thirdly, in this environment, all activities must clearly correspond to the child’s age and individual

capabilities. Fourthly, these facts must be taken into account when preparing teachers who will work with children with ASD. Teachers will have to be able to conduct not only school classes, but also various club activities of interest.

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