

# WHAT IS EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE?

# DEFINITION

- Methods that have been research supported
- Research that meets the highest standards
  - Empirical Data
  - Published & Peer Reviewed
  - Replicated
- Sources
  - Research literature
  - Independent Best Practice Reviews
  - (not Google)

# Why does it not happen?

- Technical language difficult for people to understand
- Easier to do therapies that are not supported
- Easier to sell non-science methods (emotional and vague promises)
- Therapists traditionally are not trained in strong science skills

# How can consumers tell the difference?

“A wise man proportions his belief to the evidence”

David Hume: “No testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact it endeavors to establish”




**EASIER SAID THAN DONE!!!!**

# Top Ten Signs of a Fad/ Non-Evidence Based method

10. Cure! Breakthrough!
9. New terms, new phrases coined
8. Jargon instead of scientific vocabulary
7. Denigrate science and the establishment
6. Conspiracy theories
5. *Non-objectively* stated goals
4. Vague, unmeasurable benefits
3. In place of goal attainment, it makes you “feel good”
2. Vague, unmeasurable benefits
1. \$\$\$ Promoted by those making a profit \$\$\$

# THERAPISTS

- Choose someone not afraid to use and set measurable goals THIS IS YOUR EVIDENCE
- Choose therapists who listen to you and explain how their methods work *objectively*
- Choose therapists who refine their *methods* when things don't work as opposed to blaming you or your child (that's a cop out)
- Choose therapists who don't rely on anecdotes beliefs and ideologies as their major selling point – outcomes and methods are what matter

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- Choose therapists who empower you, NOT foster dependency..
  - Don't mistake passion of the therapist for efficacy of the therapist. There are some very passionate people doing some really bad therapy...
  - Don't choose a therapy just because the therapist has 'dissed' all the other options

# METHODS

- Choose methods that are reviewed and published in the most scientific journals and best practice reviews (not those that are just think pieces)
- Choose methods that tailor to your child *not* Autism
- Do not do a method simply because your therapists says so... Always ask where is the evidence?
- Ask other parents *directly* about their results and experiences.
- Choose methods that are continually developing with the data

# MODELS

- Choose models that fit your needs as a family
- Choose models that are comprehensive of all aspects of development
- Choose models that do not require you to go against your own values without first explaining why...
- **CHOOSE MODELS THAT EMPOWER YOU AND YOUR CHILD**

# BEST PRACTICE REVIEWS

## **Scientific Consensus/Recommended**

- ABA
- IBI (intensive behaviour intervention)
- Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
- TEACCH
- Visual Supports

# BEST PRACTICE REVIEWS

(Ontario Children's Mental Health, 2003 and NSW Center for Disability Studies, 2004)

## **No Published Data/Not Supported/Controversial**

- Relationship Development Inventory (RDI)/  
Floortime
- Play Therapy
- Sensory-Integration\* Motor Interventions
- Auditory Integration
- Psychodynamic
- Facilitated Communication System

\* In one study actually increased SIB (CDDS)

# SUMMARY

- Autism is heavily researched but VERY political.
- The best weapon in doing what's right is your own mind (never be afraid to use it).
- Measurement is your decision making tool
- The most important person in the decision making process is you...(no pressure)

# THE L.E.A.R.N. APPROACH

# ABA for Autism: Research

- At Least 550 studies using ABA between 1960 and 1996.
- Rate of research has gone UP in the last 10 years



# THAT'S WHY WE USE IT...

- ABA has become VERY advanced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century AND it requires a lot of DATA to reach its full potential.

# THE MYTHS!

- Makes robots
- Is only useful for Autism
- Is out of date (behaviorism is dead)
- Is a collection of techniques
- Does not focus on the whole child
- Relies on rewards and punishers

# THE REALITY

- Is a science first and foremost (not a therapy) – all its methods come from research on how people learn
- Is explicitly NOT interested in using rewards but understands the importance of motivation
- Bad ABA has made robots
- Poor programs fail to focus on the whole child

# CARE ENOUGH TO MEASURE

- You can't improve what you can't measure!
- LEARN program measures EVERY element of the intervention
- Results are reviewed monthly
- Results are discussed with parents at every review
- Methods and system for evaluating them are explained

# PARENTS ARE INCLUDED

- Parents are urged to influence the program and be included in goal setting and the design of program strategies
- Parents are given opportunities to be taught a variety of ways to provide interventions in naturalistic and therapeutic settings
- Research made available to parents on request
- Parents urged to see themselves as empowered leaders and guiders of the program

# HOLISTIC

- Offer services beyond just EI
  - Clinical Psychology Support
  - Speech Pathology
  - Occupational Therapy
  - Parent education
  - School consultancy
  - Support Groups
  - Social skill groups
  - Academic Programs

# COMPREHENSIVE

- Therapy programs
  - Centre Based
  - Home Based
- Naturalistic methods
- Play methods
- Social skill groups
- Target whole child
  - Learning Ability
  - Language and Cognition
  - Speech
  - Communication
  - Sensory-Motor
  - Play
  - Attachment
  - Coping

# TAILORED

- We may know a lot about how people learn but we have to apply that knowledge on a case by case basis.
- Every program must be customized to the child for maximum gain
- Every program must review its success and failures for each child and refine itself accordingly.

# OVERARCHING GOAL

- Not to 'fix' Autism
- To create optimal learning conditions to develop a person who is;
  - Empowered (many skills to meet needs)
  - Adaptive (increased learning capacity)
  - Flexible (increased coping skills)

The same wish we have for every person growing up to live in this world...

# WHAT IS L.E.A.R.N.ing?

- A program that learns about each child individually to promote his or her learning
- A service that seeks to make learning and empowerment possible for everyone concerned
- A centre that learns about itself so each year it is better than the last.

# BEYOND THERAPY

# THERE IS MORE TO EI THAN THERAPY

- Best predictors of EI success are:
  - Parental involvement
  - Number of hours of intervention



# PARENT INVOLVEMENT

- Need to be coping
- Need to have the skills
- Need to have the support and guidance

# PARENT EDUCATION

- Coping is predicted by knowledge;
  - Research tells us that families who cope best with EI are educated and well informed
- Skills are a process of ongoing education and training
  - Parent training is recognised as essential in many fields. In EI it must be cutting edge.
- Support and guidance
  - EI is a journey and parents often feel they are always playing catch up. Just as they have learned one thing they need to learn another. (The better the child does the more the parent needs to learn)

# HOW L.E.A.R.N. ACHIEVES THIS

- General and specialised Parent Training courses, tailored to work in conjunction with the programs used at LEARN
- Therapists trained to work with families to identify methods for doing programs outside of therapy
- Occupational Therapist to help families work out ways to organise their lives to promote better functioning and development
- Specialty staff to work with families on behavioural programs in their homes and in the community
- Inclusion of parents at all stages of therapy
- Special courses on 'Parents as Teachers' to be run by the centre

# The hours?

- Parents as Teachers course, supported by specialist support programs, to become a feature of the LEARN service model.

# Beyond Therapy – The LEARN model

- LEARN was inspired by a parent who wanted other parents to feel the sense of achievement and empowerment she came to have.
- Its guiding theme is that we are ALL learning at all times to be better at what we do and better at achieving our goals.
- LEARN aims to create an environment where that can happen – both in and out of therapy.