

Example of autistic spectrum disorder essay

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Autism can be defined as part of a group of severe developmental problems known as Autism spectrum disorder which usually materialize in early childhood mostly before the child is three years old. Even though the symptoms and the rigorousness differ, all the autism spectrum disorders impinge on the child's aptitude to communicate and relate with other people. There is an increase in the number of children diagnosed with autism; however, it is not clear whether this is due to improved detection and reporting of autism or a factual increase in the number of cases. Though there is no known cure for autism, children suffering from this disorder can have a much easier life if intensive treatment is started early.

Symptoms

Children suffering from autism usually have complications in three fundamental development areas which include: language, behavior and social interaction. However, because symptoms and severity of autism differ very much, children with the same diagnosis may have quite different behaviors and have remarkably diverse skills. Children with severe autism have noticeable impairments or are completely unable to communicate and relate with other people. While some children show signs of autism soon after they are born, others may grow normally for a few months or years then abruptly become reserved or hostile or even lose the speech skills they had previously acquired. There are some common symptoms of autism classified under language, social skills and behavior.

Social skills

A child with autism may portray inability to respond to their name, appear not to hear people at times, poor eye contact, oppose being cuddled or being embraced, never asks for help or demand things, prefers playing alone and draws back into their own world and always appears ignorant of other people's feelings.

Language

The language development of the child is usually delayed or the child doesn't speak at all, doesn't look at people in the eyes when asking for something, unable to begin or maintain a conversation, repeat words or phrases word for word, but does not comprehend how to use them, does not seem to understand simple instructions or questions and may lose previously acquired aptitude to say words or make sentences.

Behavior

Behavior wise the child may show symptoms such as constant movement, performing repetitive movements such as spinning, rocking or hand-flapping, develop particular routines or practices and becomes distressed by even the smallest amount of change, engages in self-harming activities such as head banging, draws fascination from details of an object but does not comprehend the ' big picture' of the matter, never engages in imitative play, odd food preferences and cravings for things that are not food such as dirt or chalk and are abnormally sensitive to touch, light and sound , and yet unconscious to pain.

Children with autism find it difficult to share experiences with other people.

For example when read to they hardly identify pictures in the book. This is an important social skill for language and social development. As they grow old, some children start engaging with other people and portray lesser instability in behavior. Some children with less severe problems may eventually lead normal or close-to-normal lives. Others may however, continue to experience problems with language or social skills and teenage hood may come along with more severe behavioral problems.

Children with autism have a slower ability to gain new knowledge or skills and some display signs of abnormally low intelligence. Some children with autism however, have normal to high astuteness. These children have the ability to learn fast, yet have problems in communicating and applying what they know in day to day life as well as in social situations. A few children with autism have exceptional skills in particular areas such as music, art or math. Psychology can be defined as the study of the human mind. It is a social science that has made important contributions to understanding and treatment of autism. There are several ways in which psychiatrists and psychologists can contribute in helping children and grownups with autism. These include: psychotherapy, applied behavior analysis and developmental psychology.

Psychotherapy

Generally speaking, psychotherapy is any treatment that involves talking in the process of assisting individuals with their emotional life. One form of psychotherapy has its roots from contemporary origins in the investigative psychoanalysis formulated by Sigmund Freud. The other form of psychotherapy is believed to have its origins from behavioral principles.

Psychologists and psychiatrists working with autistic children and adults have a variety of psychotherapeutic tools available for their use. These include: role play and exposure therapy where the child is exposed to the things he fears in a controlled manner.

Psychotherapeutic treatment of children with autism is extremely demanding. It demands that the therapist has an extensive understanding of the initial three years of human development. The therapist must be personally in tune with the feelings of the child with autism. He must be able to identify the child's needs and adjust to meet such needs. It is important for the therapist to be able to distinguish between the anger of an autistic child whose rhythmic prototypes have been disrupted and the nervousness and fright of a child who is struggling to come out from the autistic state.

Applied Behavior Analysis

This is a type of behavioral therapy which is usually utilized with success to treat patients with autism. Applied behavior analysis is different from talk therapy as it involves carefully formulated processes where the patient is taught different skills using incentives to strengthen correct answers and ideal actions. This kind of therapy is carried out by therapists with specific applied behavior analysis training.

Discrete Trial Training is one of the most common forms of applied behavioral analysis. It involves the therapist breaking down the skills into the smallest tasks possible then taught individually. Separate trials can be used to teach the patient imitation, eye contact, self-help, fine motor skills conversation and language. The child begins with acquiring the small skill and improves gradually to the more complicated skills. To teach imitation

skills, the therapist may ask the child to do something like clapping their hands the child is expected to copy what the therapist is doing and if they do it right they receive a reward such as a toy a raisin. If the child is wrong the therapist says “ No”, pauses for a moment before repeating the same. The therapist has to ensure that each trial is discrete or separate. The therapist can also give the child physical assistance by helping them clap if the child answers wrongly two times in a row. This method is utilized in some conventional applied behavioral analysis programs.

However, most applied behavioral analysis programs usually utilize prompts for each trial so that the child does not get any trial wrong and always be strengthened with a reward. This is commonly known as the errorless learning. The child never receives a ‘ No’ rather they are directed the right response at all times. The prompts are reduced gradually so that the child learns the right response on their own. This psychological intervention usually takes place in school or at home and is usually supervised by a board certified behavior analyst.

Developmental Psychology

This is a branch of psychology that is involved in child development and investigates typical and atypical development. It is the basis of several autism treatments such as Relationship development intervention and Floortime. The Relationship development intervention is a program that is centered on the parent of the child with autism and it’s intended to assist in laying missing pathways in the brain. There are extraordinary claims made about this therapy. It is claimed that if a parent follows this system they can expect their children to develop abilities to overcome the symptoms of

autism.

In conclusion is a developmental disorder that manifests in the first three years of a child, and impinges on the brain's typical development of social and communication skills. The symptoms of this disorder include poor communication and social skills. This disorder can be treated psychological by use of different psychological therapies such as psychotherapy, applied behavioral analysis and developmental psychology.

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