

Pivotal Response Treatments

for Autism

**Communication, Social, &
Academic Development**

by

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and

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with invited contributors

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Table 1.2. Illustrations of the progression of intervention started at different stages

Area	Objective	Example
<i>Beginning</i>		
Communicative intent	Teach the child the relationship between his or her vocalizations and reinforcement/consequences.	Sally loves her Elmo doll. Her mother models saying, "Elmo." Sally reaches for doll and says, "Ooo." Her mother reinforces the attempt by giving Sally the Elmo doll.
First words	Teach the child that each object has a specific label and how to increase spontaneous/independent use of expressive language.	Francisco and his father are playing with a toy box of favorite toys. Francisco's father takes out a car and asks, "What's this?" Francisco says, "Ca," and his father reinforces this attempt. Francisco's father then takes out a ball and asks, "Now what do you need?" Francisco responds, "Ball." Francisco's father has him label each toy presented while his son remains motivated by this activity.
Two-word combinations	Expand length and variety of child's utterances. Introducing this step is recommended after the child uses at least 50 single words spontaneously/independently.	Timmy's mother is pushing him on a swing. His mother pauses the swing and asks, "More swing?" Timmy says, "Mo swing." His mother pushes several more times and then asks, "What do you want?" Timmy replies, "Mo swing," so his mother continues pushing.
Beginning question asking	Introduce the child to beginning queries (e.g., "What's that?" "Where is it?"), and extend the child's ability to independently learn new information from the environment.	Luke's grandmother places his favorite candy into an opaque bag without him seeing. She prompts him to ask, "What's that?" Luke looks up and says, "Dat?" His grandmother pulls out the candy and as she gives it to him, she says, "It's a piece of candy."
Beginning initiations with peers and siblings	Teach the child to initiate expressive language (e.g., requests) with siblings and peers.	While taking turns playing with a ball ramp toy, Andrew's mother prompts him to ask his sister for the ball. Andrew looks at his sister and says, "Ball." His sister then gives Andrew the ball, and he gets to roll it down the ramp.
<i>Intermediate</i>		
Multiple cues	Teach the child to attend to multiple features/attributes of an object and to expand the complexity of his or her receptive and expressive language.	During snack time, Sila's father tells him he can choose either a green apple or a red apple. Sila requests, "Green apple," and correctly retrieves the green apple from the plate.
Verbs	Expand the length, variety, and complexity of the child's utterances. Following the developmental sequence of verb acquisition is recommended.	While playing with bubbles, Spencer pops all of the bubbles. His grandfather then asks Spencer if he wants to blow more bubbles. Spencer replies, "Blow bubbles," and gets to blow more bubbles into the air.

Multiple-word utterances (three or more words)	Continue to extend the child’s length of utterances.	David and his father are playing ball. David’s father asks, “Throw ball up or kick ball fast?” David replies, “Throw ball.” His father asks, “Throw ball where?” David says, “Throw ball up.” His father then throws the ball up, and David runs after it.
Question asking	Extend the child’s repertoire of queries to include remaining “wh-” questions (e.g. “Whose is it?” “Who is it?” “When?”), and increase the sophistication of question asking. Also use queries to target language structures such as prepositions and past tense verbs.	Addie and her teacher are playing with balloons. Addie closes her eyes while her teacher hides the balloon. Addie then opens her eyes and asks, “Where is it?” Her teacher replies, “Where is what?” Addie uses a longer question and asks, “Where is the balloon?” Her teacher says, “It’s under the table.” Addie quickly runs to get the balloon from under the table.
Initiations with peers and siblings	Broaden the child’s complexity of initiations toward peers and siblings to include longer utterances, directives, comments, and more sophisticated play.	During art, Monica needs a new marker. She tries to get one but cannot reach it. Her preschool aide says, “Ask your friend who has the can of markers. Remember, use her name.” Monica then gestures toward the marker can and says, “Maria, I need a marker.” Her peer gives her the marker can. A few moments later, Monica’s aide walks over and prompts Monica to show her drawing to her neighbor. Monica turns to her peer and comments, “I made a sun.” Her peer replies, “I made flowers and they’re growing.”
Initial play dates	Develop the initial set of skills necessary for successful play dates, including responsivity, turn-taking, and sharing. Use priming to familiarize the child with the activities/games to be done during the play date.	Nate and his mother review how to make fruit smoothies and play several board games the night before his play date. The next afternoon, his friend comes over. Nate’s mother has Nate ask his friend what kind of fruit and ice cream he wants to use. Nate’s mother also has him show his friend how to make the smoothie in the blender and pour it in the cup. Nate and his friend then play several of Nate’s favorite board games.
Preacademics	Target kindergarten readiness skills, including number, letter, color, and shape identification; counting; letter-to-sound correspondence; sight reading; and basic letter formation.	During lunch, Richie’s father has him practice counting. Before giving Richie a handful of French fries, Richie’s father asks him to count them and reminds him to use his index finger. Richie begins counting, “1, 2, 3, 4. Four fries.” Richie’s father gives him the plate of fries, and they enjoy lunch.

(continued)

Table 1.2. (continued)

Area	Objective	Example
Initial social conversation	Build the child's ability to participate in simple reciprocal social conversations with others, including on-topic question asking, on-topic comments, and on-topic initiations. Self-management is often a helpful tool for building these skills.	Jack loves to talk about airplanes but has difficulty making appropriate on-topic initiations when conversing with others about different subjects. His teacher is using self-management to help Jack learn to make appropriate on-topic initiations. Each time Jack makes an on-topic initiation following a subject introduced by his teacher, he gives himself a point and gets to trade it for a favorite candy. His teacher says, "Today I ate vanilla ice cream." Jack replies "I also like ice cream," and gives himself a point.
<i>Advanced</i>		
Reading	Facilitate all reading skills being taught at school, including sight words, phonics, and reading comprehension. Home-school coordination is very helpful in meeting this goal.	Before playing on the computer, Sadie's mother has her select the right word from an array of three different words. After Sadie picks the word <i>computer</i> , she gets to play her favorite computer game. Sadie's mother has her practice her list of sight words from school throughout the day using natural reinforcers (e.g., when Sadie wants to ride her bike, she has to identify the correct sight word).
Writing	Target all age-appropriate writing skills, including letter formation, word formation, and sentence formation. Home-school coordination is very helpful in meeting this goal.	Tyrone loves to color. Each time he wants a different crayon, his grandfather has him trace the name of the color before getting to use the desired crayon. This is helpful because in kindergarten Tyrone is currently learning to trace words and do some independent writing.
Priming	Support the child's ability to attend to, participate in, and succeed in the activities, instructions, content, and so forth presented at school. Priming is not a tool limited to advanced skills or upper grades; using it throughout intervention when appropriate, including during the pre-school years, is recommended.	Each day after school, Eric's teacher has his mother review the storybook to be read during circle time the next day. This helps Eric become familiar with the story, facilitates his ability to stay focused during circle time, and facilitates his ability to make appropriate on-topic questions and comments.

Modifications/accommodations to the school curriculum	Facilitate the child's ability to master the school curriculum and participate to the best of his or her ability.	Math is one of Max's less preferred subjects, and he often becomes frustrated with the number of problems he needs to complete on a given worksheet. Instead of requiring Max to complete all 12 problems on the math worksheet, his teacher has him choose 6.
Homework	Enable the child to learn homework's content and participate in homework to the best of his or her ability.	Leslie's mother identifies natural reinforcers that she can incorporate into homework to help keep Leslie motivated to complete her assignments. Tonight, Leslie has to write five sentences about red objects. Leslie's mother collects an array of red objects that Leslie really likes (e.g., red licorice, a red ball, red nail polish). Each time Leslie writes a sentence about a preferred red object, she then gets to use that particular red item.
Advanced play dates	Expand the child's repertoire of skills necessary for successful play dates. Increase the child's independence in sustaining more sophisticated and longer play dates. Continue the use of priming as needed.	The day before her play date, Madison and her aide went to the bowling alley and practiced using the score board and cheering for each other. The next day, Madison's aide reminded her and her friends to take turns and to cheer for each other. Madison's aide then faded her presence and provided minimal prompting, only when necessary.
After-school/extracurricular/sports activities	Further support the child's friendship development and social network. Also, continue to include the child in community settings with typically developing peers.	Andre loves to swim. His parents enroll him in the neighborhood swim team, of which many of Andre's classmates are also a part. Andre's aide participates as one of the swim assistants not only to build Andre's swimming skills but also to ensure he and his peers practice showing each other how to do specific strokes, cheer for each other, and work in teams.
Advanced social conversation	Extend the child's ability to participate in more elaborate and sophisticated reciprocal social conversations with others, including peers.	Todd experiences difficulty in sustaining conversations with peers for long periods of time without returning to a perseverative topic of interest. Todd practices expanding the length of time he stays on topic with his cousin.