



Hi and welcome back! In this video I'm going to teach you what to do when what you're doing isn't working. I know many of you can relate to that feeling of 'oh nothing that I do is working and I'm not sure what to do next'. Here is the solution to that. You need to learn to seek out the root, and I'm going to tell you what that means.

First, I want to share with you some clues that you are not addressing the root of the challenges and issues that are going on with your child.

The first clue is that your child has been actively participating in ongoing treatment and schooling and things are not improving. If you've been doing some therapy for quite a bit of time or your child has been actively participating in maybe a school special education program or some therapies, whether through school or outside of school, and you're not seeing changes and results from that, chances are you haven't really gotten to the root of what the issue is.

Another clue that you're not addressing the root is that you're using all the strategies that you intuitively know and have learned as a parent, and they're not working. You may think 'well I know I have decent parenting skills because I have other kids in our family and they seem to be coming out okay and what I'm doing with them seems to be working'.

But, it's just not working or ineffective with this other child. Or maybe you've been to some parenting classes or sessions with professionals that taught you skills for specifically working with your child who has neurodevelopmental issues but you're finding that that's really not working either. Chances are you really haven't gotten to the root of the issue.

The third clue is everyone around you keeps saying things like, well your child is just "choosing" to do X, Y or Z or he just needs "to work harder" or she just needs to "pay more attention" or "apply herself more" and those kinds of things and most of you have heard those. And you have a nagging feeling that that's not the problem. That's a clue that you're really not getting to the root of the issue.



I know so many parents who have gone along with that thought process that other people have told them, 'well your child is not applying himself', or 'if he would pay attention better', or 'maybe if you did something about the attention'. Or 'maybe if you incentivized him with reward systems for working harder or getting more things done or choosing to do more appropriate behaviors'.

I know parents who have spent a lot of time and energy going down that path and implemented those things and then they find that that's really not working either. The child's development isn't improving or it's not improving at a very fast pace.

And I find that parents intuitively know with their kids when it truly is an issue of just the child not applying himself or just an issue of attention or of making a choice. I find with the parents I work with that they really do intuitively know when it's that issue or it is something more. And for the vast majority of these kids, these are the kinds of things people have been saying about them for years and it's far from just an issue of them making a choice or just them needing to attend better.

If those are the kinds of things you're hearing over and over again and things aren't improving chances are you're not getting to the root of the issue. Here is how to seek out the root of the problem.

The first thing is you have to understand that there are developmental foundations for every skill and behavior you want your child to attain. So whether it's an academic skill or something like tying shoes or having a friend or carrying on a conversation take any skill or ability, there are developmental foundations that set the stage for those kinds of skills. And if those developmental foundations have not been firmly developed and there are gaps in the development in those areas your child is not going to be able to learn and perform higher level skills and behaviors at an appropriate level.

Let's take an example that I come across a lot in my practice where families come in and they say, well my child is doing okay in school and these other areas but I'm really worried about him socially. I'm really worried because he doesn't really have any friends and I'm worried about him feeling left out and not having anybody or relationships in the future.



They may have tried a lot of different things for that. They may have tried social skills groups, play dates and all different kinds of things and it is still not coming together for their child. The reason for that is because there are many, many developmental foundations that start within the first months and year of life that set the stage for an individual to have higher level and more sophisticated friendships and relationships once a child hits school age and beyond.

Most developmental foundations in the areas of interactions, relationships, communication, motor development - if those aren't there it's going to make it very hard for the child to engage in age appropriate peer relationships with other kids. The same thing goes for learning how to read or how to write.

Handwriting is a big issue. Families will say 'oh I've practiced and practiced and he's been in OT forever for that and we've been doing all kinds of things with it and his handwriting is still iffy at best'. Well, when you look at handwriting there are many, many developmental foundations that set the stage for appropriate effective handwriting. Things like muscle control and muscle tone, being able to focus on one thing for a period of time, being able to visually track things, being able to coordinate what my eyes are seeing and what my hands are doing. All of these kinds of things are developmental foundations that set the stage for learning how to do handwriting.

Now the thing is many kids when they enter the school system or start hanging out with other kids or whatever the skill area might be, they already have the earlier developmental foundations in place to be able to learn those new higher level skills when they are put in a situation where they have the opportunity to learn things like friendships and those kinds of things.

But for kids with neurodevelopmental issues, many times there are gaps or holes in those foundations and that makes it very challenging when they do get to enter situations like school where it's time to learn and do handwriting or reading or whatever it is. It makes it very challenging for them to learn and move along in that process because they are missing all of these things that should have come before that.



You have to realize that there are developmental foundations that go way back in the process of development that form the foundation for all of the skills and behaviors that your child is struggling with right now.

The second thing I want you to think about is to identify the skill you want your child to master and then get information about what foundations are required. For example, let's say you want your child to be able to carry on an appropriate conversation. There are many foundations that come before being able to engage in a conversation.

Obviously, you are probably aware of things like well they have to be able to speak. Well, yes, that's typically a part of a conversation. But there is way more than just being able to speak that goes into that. There are developmental foundations of understanding relationship, understanding interaction, understanding the ebbing and flowing and giving and taking that goes into interacting and is a huge part of conversation. Being able to have an appropriate vocabulary and being able to understand the meaning and context of information. These are all some of the developmental foundations that pave the way for being able to appropriately being able to engage in conversation.

Yet many times kids go through treatment protocols or skill building programs where they are taught the steps of how to have an appropriate conversation, and it has nothing to do with those developmental foundations. Then parents wonder why their child, in real life, can't carry on a conversation. It's because they were taught how to have a conversation in a way that is completely devoid of meaning number one and it doesn't take into account the real root of the problem. We need to get information about what foundations are required.

Talk to the therapists working with your child. Talk to the people in the school. Look on the internet and read books about child development. Find checklists from pediatricians that talk about developmental components from birth all the way up through young adulthood. Look at those and really start to think about whether your child has these foundations. Is my child able to do these things? You'll probably be able to begin to see some gaps that will stand out to you and that gives you some insight as to what are the more root level things that are preventing your child from making progress in the higher level skills you want them to develop.

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I also want you to get familiar with the concept of backing up to jump ahead. This is similar to what I talked about when I did the video on slowing down. I said that a lot of times we need to slow down in order to speed up. Now I'm talking about backing up to jump ahead.

You may feel really compelled to want to just jump ahead and start working on these things that are obviously a problem for your child. But what I want you to realize is that by backing up and going deeper into development, by backing up and looking at earlier foundations and earlier developmental stages that need a lot of practice and skill development, you actually will allow your child to jump ahead much more quickly.

I talk about it also as a pyramid. You can't support the top of a pyramid if you don't have a solid base! You can keep trying to build and build the top of that pyramid but it's not going to stay up because it doesn't have a sturdy foundation.

The developmental milestones and foundations that come before higher level skills form the base of that pyramid. It allows those higher level skills that you're working on to have something to support it. So by backing up you are actually allowing for your child to jump ahead in his or her development.

What we find with most families is that by backing up and filling in those developmental gaps and holes that actually the child leaps ahead more quickly. Things that families were banging their heads against a wall to teach and teach and teach, and they weren't sticking, just naturally begin to develop as a result of filling in the gaps. And I have many, many families who share experiences about trying to so hard for so many years to try and work on something, only to find that when they backed up and filled in the gaps, their child developed those naturally on his own.

I also want to encourage you to continue asking questions and looking deeper. When a child isn't making progress with something, as a clinician that's always a red flag for me that I haven't gone back far enough and I haven't looked deep enough into the root of what the issue is. I want you to have that same way of thinking for your child.



Don't take at face value what someone, even a professional tells you about why your child is or isn't making progress. Look at what has been targeted, what's going on in those therapy sessions, what the goal is of that treatment and begin to think about perhaps deeper more foundational level things that haven't been addressed that may be impacting that lack of progress. Keep asking, keep questioning that and keep searching and looking deeper and deeper and deeper until you find the root of the issue. When you start to target that is when you're going to start to see the progress.

My Best,

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