

Teens on the Spectrum

Joshua Feder, MD

Kids Institute for Development and Advancement

September 25, 2015



Thank You

- KIDA: Kianna Collier.
- Interdisciplinary Council on Developmental and Learning Disorders: Stuart Shanker, et. al.
- Profectum: Serena Wieder, et. al.
- Ed Tronick – break and repair
- Dan Siegel – adolescent development
- George Engel/ Urie Bronfenbrenner – system levels
- David Sackett / Institute of Medicine – Evidence Based Practice
- You



Objectives:

Make Time to Think

1. Learn a developmental approach to sorting through challenges at any age.
2. Learn important things about adolescence that help us understand and address challenges.
3. Hope & humility: If we have time to think about it we can usually come up with ideas to keep trying.



What is ASD to you?



What is ASD to you?

I want him to tell me ‘I love you mom’

I want her to have friends

I want him to be safe and happy

I’m worried that she will be hurt by others

I think he has some really great ideas

If we could just get her to focus...

The electronics are out of control

If I have to answer another question about

He doesn’t sleep.

She won’t shower.

The pancakes were ‘wrong’ and the tantrum was huge

We can’t go out in public

I’m so worried what will happen when we can’t care for him anymore



Teen issues?



Teen issues?

Severe tantrums

Stronger

Sexual activity

Internet

Vulnerable

Transition

Seizures

Electronics

Hygiene (guys, girls)

Wanting to date

Dating

Stalking

Stalked

Inappropriate Online

Gaming

Driving

Depression

Anxiety



‘Can’t we just train him?’

The problem of compliance and context

- We need it for safety and other things
- But it can make people vulnerable
- How to help a person understand that different situations have different responses?



Research

- Research on this is difficult to do
- We have to look beyond the usual studies to other fields
- Mental Health
- Human and animal development
- Anthropology
- Sociology

Clinical Judgment

- There are no studies that speak to each individual situation
- So every time we need to think about it as if it were a new challenge
- But we can use what worked before

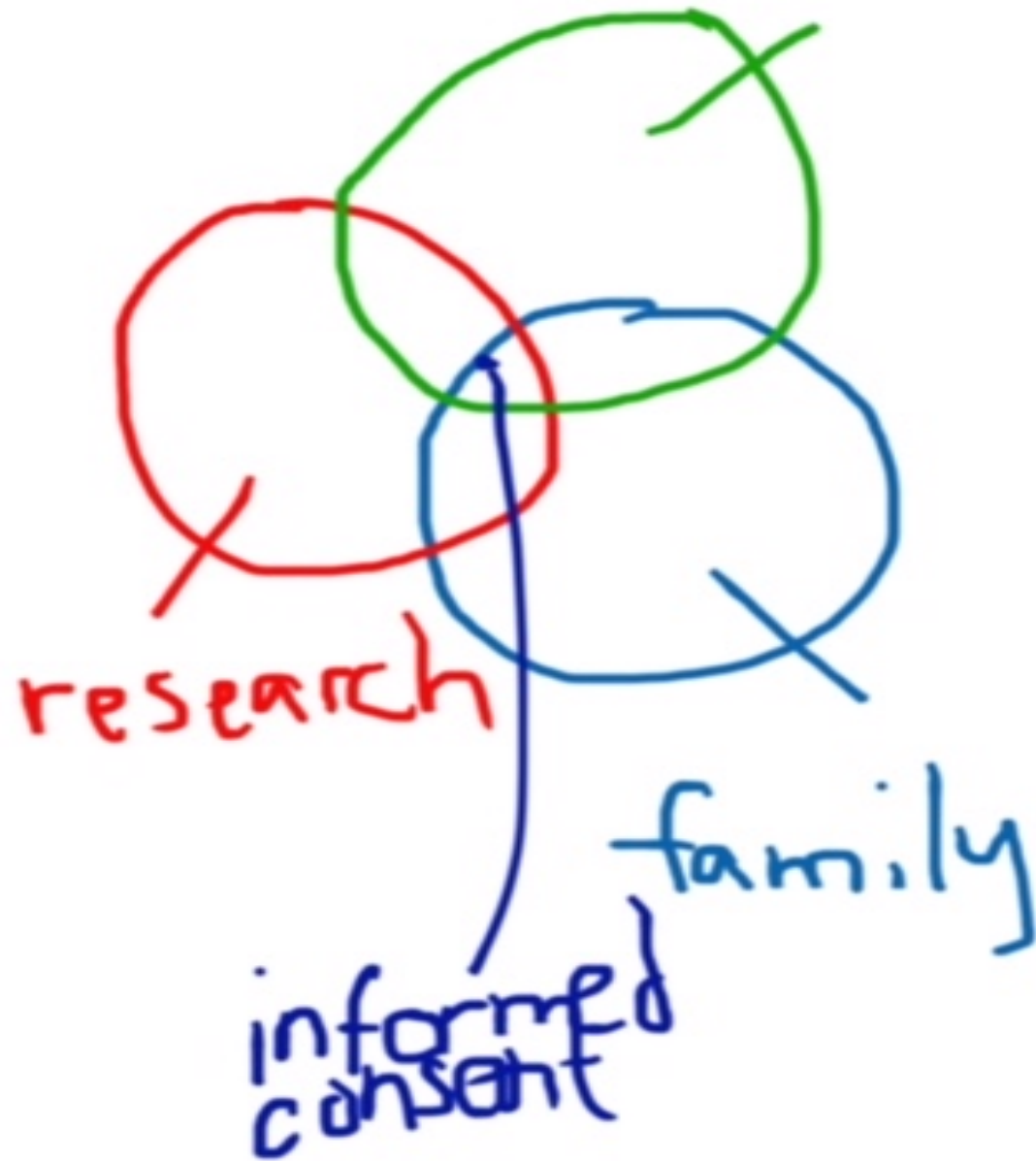
Family Culture and Values

Evidence Based Practice

- Relevant research
- Clinical judgment
- Family culture and values

These make true informed consent possible

Judgement



What have you heard about Developmental Approaches?



Calm enough



Connected



Flow of interaction



Break and repair of interactions



Everybody's so different:
Let's list some of the ways



Some big kinds of differences

- Sensory experience and intensity
- Motor tone and planning
- Receptive communication (non verbal too)
- Expressive communication (non verbal too)
- Visual spatial function
- Problem solving: idea, plan, sequence, execution, adaptation



Why focus on relationships?



Relationships are important

- For brain and body development
- For communication and problem solving
- For safety



What happens in a good relationship?

Think about some great relationships

What was going on that was great?



Good relationships have

- Calm
- Connected
- Flow of interaction
- All the people benefit
- Balance of repair of breaks in connection



Support to caregivers (parents, teachers, others)

- Making time to work together
- Helping people come up with ideas to try
- (not just telling a person what to)
- Keep working on it



What do you know about teenagers?



What usually happens to...

- Emotional intensity?



What usually happens to...

- Tendency to explore and take risks?



What usually happens to...

- Abstract thinking?



What usually happens to...

- Social drive?



What usually happens to...

- Emotional intensity usually increases
- Tendency to explore and take risks goes up
- Abstract thinking can be more complex but may be illogical and emotionally based
- Social drive is usually higher but directed more toward peers and away from adults



Can we USE these changes?

- Intensity – maybe people who didn't seem to care enough about some things might care more now
- Exploration – maybe more open to some new things, presented carefully
- Abstract thinking – may be more able to use symbolic thinking to do better
- Social drive – may be more able to connect and then improve through relationships



Some examples:

- Guy who runs off at school
- Guy who spits / won't sort the silverware
- Girl who hits and is on a lot of meds
- Guy sexually acting out in the hot tub
- Girl seeking a boyfriend at her 'job'
- Girl gets hooked on pot
- Girl on the internet 24/7 flunks college
- Guy stalking young children



A word about medications

- Medications might help a good plan work better, and at times are very helpful
- But medication can't make up for an inadequate plan or lack of support
- More information about medications at www.circlestretch.com



Try to think of *all* the reasons why:



Useful categories of ‘why’

- Biological: genetics, maturation*, hormones...
- Psychological: how we think and feel...
- Social: family, school, community...

*Developmental vs. chronological level –
‘he’s big’, he ‘should’ (maybe not able)



Let's go back to the problems we listed

Use what we know about teens:

- Emotional intensity
- Exploration
- Abstract thinking
- Social drive

And what we know about helping

- Calm, connection, flow, repair
- Sensory, motor, comm, visual, planning
- Support to caregiver
- Biological, psychological, social levels

To come up with some ideas to try



Make time to think



www.joshufedermd.com

www.Circlestretch.com

