



NEWSLETTER

CONTENT

1 OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY

4 IT'S "WE" WHO CAN
BUILD A SUPPORTIVE
COMMUNITY

APRIL, 2018

We, at reach call the month of April a Triple blast Month, it's the Occupational Therapy Month, the Autism awareness month and most importantly it is also our Birthday month. Reach therapy Center For Children completed 7 years of service on 25th April, 2018, and we can't rejoice more! All of us strongly believe in spreading awareness, acceptance and drawing attention to the right causes, thereby working towards helping each child coming to us reach their fullest potential.

In this month's newsletter it seems best fit to talk about the two things very special to us i.e. Pediatric occupational therapy and what we as a community can do to support children on the spectrum in India.



OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Occupational Therapy is a profession that helps people, from infancy to old age, to do what they like and need, through therapeutic use of daily activities. It is an age-old profession that uses a client centred approach for intervention and treatment.

Occupational therapists (OTs) are trained to work in various domains. OTs believe in using a holistic approach. The first step is observation followed by evaluation, using their strong knowledge base of psychological, physical, emotional, and social makeup; OT practitioners can evaluate how a condition (or risk for one) is affecting their client's body and mind. After which using input from their client and his/her family/care provider, they develop individualized goals that allow the client to resume or pursue their valued occupations. The next and the most important step is the intervention plan to help improve or maintain the client's



ability to perform daily activities and achieve the set goals. And then regular reassessments and reviews are performed to ensure utmost success.

Occupational therapy practitioners also have a wider focus, i.e. on groups or communities. The group and community

therapies aim at developing and implementing programs that promote healthy behaviors, form support groups which address particular issues such as community education about various health conditions and safety measures, and community transitions for individuals with disability, mental health, and addictions.

At Reach Therapy Center For Children, we are a team of Pediatric Occupational therapists, working with children having mental and physical disabilities. We believe in using research and evidence based practice to ensure that all forms of interventions are effective. Our focus is to build on crucial skills for the child so as to help him/her grow up into an independent and functional adult.

As pediatric Occupational therapists we work with infants, children, and even adolescents having an array of sensory, physical, motor and/or social difficulties. OTs use exercises, activities, strategies and accommodations to help kids develop the skills they need to become more independent. Pediatric OTs are equipped to deal with children having various medical conditions like;

- Autism
- Cerebral Palsy
- Attention Deficient Disorders
- Learning Disabilities
- Neurological Disorders
- Sensory Processing Disorders
- Developmental Delays
- Genetic Conditions
- Downs Syndrome
- Handwriting Difficulties
- Feeding Difficulties
- Other Pediatric Conditions

If you've noticed that your child is missing certain developmental milestones, OT can help. Occupational therapists work with children to help them achieve many different skill sets in turn improving their functional participation. Here are some examples:

- Self-care or activities of daily living (brushing teeth,

buttoning clothes, using eating utensils)

- Eye-Hand coordination (writing on a classroom whiteboard, copying in a notebook what the teacher writes on the board)
- Fine motor skills (grasping and controlling a pencil, using scissors)
- Gross motor skills (doing jumping jacks, working on core muscle strength for and participating in sports)
- Planning and organization (helping a child pack his bag for school, using a graphic organizer for writing)
- Sensory processing (helping children process sensory information appropriately to avail improved interaction with their environment and generate a better motor response)



Occupational Therapy leads to improving children's ability to concentrate better and complete their schoolwork with more success. It increases their self-confidence as they learn to do more tasks independently.

The role of an OT is surely challenging but equally gratifying. Seeing the growth of the children and their families is extremely satisfying. Seeing a child's face light up when he/she masters something new, or hearing a parent exclaim with joy when their child delivers something beyond expectations, is really heart warming. The little success' in a big day for each child is what keeps us going. It allows us to truly experience the joy of being a fruitful therapist, permitting us to make a difference, even if just a small one in so many lives

“Pediatric occupational therapists work with infants, children and adolescents having an array of sensory, physical, motor and/or social difficulties. ”

IT IS “WE” WHO CAN BUILD A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY

A recent government survey of parents suggests that 1 in 45 children, ages 3 through 17, have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the United States in the past year. According to Center for Disease Control approximately 1 in 68 children in India have ASD. This forms a significant population of our country and a very large group of individuals who must be supported.

Autism is not just a medical diagnosis, there is much more to it! These individuals have challenges with language and communication, social interaction and behavior. Many scientists and researchers today claim that some of the most famous and rather important people in history, such as Albert Einstein, Mozart, Charles Darwin, Sir Issac Newton, Michelangelo etc., were likely to be on the spectrum. All of them had poor social and communication skills, inability to make small talk and conversations with peers, fondness for ritualized fixed routines, limited interests, and an unusual lifestyle. All of them had one more thing in common, i.e., in spite of their shortcomings; they were all pure geniuses in their respective fields. They are also exceptional visual thinkers. They see so much more than others. Therefore it is important that we realize that individuals with autism are unique and special in their own way. The month of April is the autism awareness month. And there is no better way to celebrate it, other than spreading awareness and understanding about this condition, promoting acceptance and inclusion in the community and providing Autistic individuals and their families support in every way possible.

Even though it takes one, to initiate a movement, it takes a larger force to drive a message home and bring about change. Therefore, it is important for us as a community to change our perspective, to be open, accepting and be supportive towards individuals with Autism. Each and every member of the community be it relatives, neighbours, schools, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, shopkeepers etc. must join this movement to ensure the change.

A few simple steps that we as a community can take for them are:

1. **Learn about Autism:** If you meet someone with autism, you have met one person with autism. It's best to read more and learn more about Autism, this will help equip you to better understand the

child, approach them appropriately, and also the parents will feel extremely supported.



2. **Lend a compassionate ear:** Some parents may want to share their feelings, or talk about what they are going through; it is important that you are a good listener. Being understanding and empathetic can aide in helping these parents get through rough patches.
3. **Ask about the child:** All parents love to talk about their child's successes and achievements. Be there with the parents to celebrate their child's accomplishments.
4. **Be inclusive:** This is the need of the hour. We all need to be inclusive as a community at cultural functions, schools, social setting like a party, or a mall. Be friendly and open towards autistic children this will help build their confidence and self-esteem, while encouraging them to re-visit a social setting.
5. **Help Advocate:** All Autistic children need a helping hand but also need a voice to be heard. Use every chance you get to advocate for the rights of the child and promote inclusion.
6. **Parent Support groups:** Forum For Autism [FFA] is a parent body to empathize with each other, understand their concerns and anxiety. It is formed and run by the parents of autistic children, who have come together to fight for the common cause. FFA organizes a lot of events and parent education workshops to keep everyone constantly informed. This support group also runs a library with books on Autism and related disorders. It maintains a database of various therapies like speech therapy, auditory retraining, sensory integration, special schools,

vocational guidance, and special dieticians to combat development disorders and associated difficulties these children with autism face.

<https://www.forumforautism.org/>

7. **Don't give up on them:** Parents whose child has recently been diagnosed with autism, will generally be caught up, stressed and worried. They may be shelling all their time and energy trying to access numerous therapies and services their child needs. This can be taxing, and a very big reason as to why they don't call or visit as much. Their child may also have difficulty with transitions to a new place or from one setting to another, making visiting a friend's house or going out challenging. They are dealing day in and day out, and will have to do it life-long. Once in while it'd be nice if you make accommodations for them. Making just one phone call to check up on them can be really helpful and reassuring. Drop by if you can, arrange dinners, bring them their favorite take out food, provide an environment where they can unwind and be themselves, now and then. Arrange play dates for their child with yours. **Be there for the parents, caregivers and the family at large.**

All the parents of autistic individuals ask for is mindfulness and inclusion. That is the least we can provide. Along with availability of more quality and ethical rehabilitation services, in every locality, inclusion in school and availability of more special schools and vocational centers is another necessity. Lets strive to create an atmosphere where these children can be happy; instead of being judged, looked down upon, or ridiculed. Lets give them respect and equal opportunities. They have language and communication difficulties because of which they might not be able to talk to us, but that doesn't mean they are unaware of what is happening around them. If they try to reach out, respond to them. If they initiate a greeting, shake hands with them or give them a smile. **In spite of their differences remember they are able.** Think of those parents who didn't choose this life for themselves, think of how they are petrified of stepping out of their house; forget taking vacations, even just a trip to the grocery store, mall or dinner at a restaurant needs to be considered and reconsidered because there's a high chance they might be judged. Lets be a better society, lets change our attitudes. Lets be more compassionate human beings who look closely, listen carefully, and support unconditionally.

Lets make it a better place for you and for me and for all the autistic individuals and their families!



"All the parents of Autistic individuals ask for is mindfulness and inclusion. That is the least we can provide."

For any question or concerns regarding the newsletter please write to us on: reachtherapycenterforchildren@gmail.com

- Simoni Parikh
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Reach Therapy Center for Children

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