



Temple Grandin is a remarkable woman who has “emerged” from her autism. Her two books about being autistic coupled with her complete and total understanding of the differences in the world around her versus the world inside of her make her a remarkable study in autism. Her inner reflections and strong communication ability give us a view of autism as never before.

THE ROLE of CHIROPRACTIC **in the Care of Children with AUTISM**

“It has only been recently that I realized the magnitude of the difference between me and most other people.”

Temple Grandin, Author *Thinking in Pictures*

In her books Temple repeatedly discusses sensory integration difficulties as being the core of her autism. Not surprisingly, growing numbers of professionals also tout sensory difficulties as one of the hallmarks of autism.

Sensory integration is defined as the disorganization of the multisensory input into the body. People who experience sensory integration problems have profound and often debilitating difficulty with touch, taste, smell, sound or visual input. Non-autistics can often experience sensory issues as well, such as the irritation we feel from a band playing too loudly, or an immediate headache from a certain smell. While these may be bothersome to the typical person, such sensory stimuli can be “noxious” to the autistic child and often manifest in infancy as colic and in the older

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child as hyperactivity, the "inability to listen", or unexplained behavior issues, especially in children who lack communication.

The senses help children make sense of the world and any impairment creates an imbalance, an inability to receive and process information from the environment as taken in through the nervous system. For this reason, proper sensory functioning is often referred to as a 'foundation' skill. As our knowledge of helping children and adults with autism has grown, an interdisciplinary approach to treatment appears to be the most beneficial. Especially within the realm of occupational therapy, various techniques have been developed to treat the sensory integration aspect of autism. Chiropractic, which can be highly effective with this population, is often overlooked.

Chiropractic care should be the cornerstone of the sensory integration treatment plan for the PDD child. While it has regularly been associated with back pain or headache, increasing numbers of parents are seeking chiropractors for children and especially for children with developmental issues. Chiropractic care differs from many of the other therapies used with autistics in that it is directed to the heart of the problem: the lack of homeostasis in the body, which can, in turn, produce a disease state. Treatments are directed to the imbalances in the nervous system which inhibit sensory processing. By directly affecting the nervous system, chiropractic care for the autistic child can begin to change the many sensory integration issues by facilitating input into the organs and areas of the body involved in sensory integration, including the skin and the nervous system.

The chiropractor administers an adjustment as the mainstream portion of care. An adjustment is applied to the spine, most often by the hand of the doctor. Occasionally an adjusting instrument is employed, but all chiropractors are taught to "adjust" with their hands. The adjustment is administered in areas where there is the presence of a SUBLUXATION. Subluxation occurs where a segment of the spine consisting of two vertebrae and a disc between them, has lost their juxtaposition. Proper juxtaposition is necessary to maintain the integrity of the various systems that are located there, not the least of which is the nervous system. The presence of SUBLUXATION can cause illness as well as a host of other problems for the child.

The adjustment will affect the child or adult in three ways.

chi-ro-prac-tic

[Greek, *cheir*, hand + *praktikos*, done by]

That science and art concerned with the relationship between the spinal column and the nervous system as it affects the restoration and maintenance of health, primarily utilizing the hands to adjust misaligned or malfunctioning vertebrae

A SUBLUXATION refers to the structural misalignment or fixation between two or more adjacent vertebrae, which may cause nerve irritation and resultant alteration in normal mechanical and neurological functions of the body.

An ADJUSTMENT is the specific chiropractic procedure used to eliminate or reduce a subluxation, thereby restoring normal neural transmission to the involved area, and assisting the body's natural ability to achieve maximum health.

DEEP PRESSURE

Many autistic children who communicate verbally tell us that deep pressure is very important to them. The child may often be tactile defensive and shun any type of contact except deep pressure. The lateral spinothalamic tract of the nervous system, which is sensitive to pressure, can be activated in the child through the deep pressure applied in the adjustment. This aspect can significantly diminish tactile

CHIROPRACTIC

defensiveness, and has a remarkable effect on the child. Parents find it to be an effective alternative to traditional occupational therapy exercises, or using a squeeze machine to get a child to accept deep pressure treatments. Once the child becomes accustomed to the deep pressure, light touch appears less noxious to them.

is a holistic or natural healing art, which is used to improve the overall function of the body.

It is not a treatment for disease or any one condition.

It does not stimulate or inhibit or turn things on and off in the body (as do many drugs).

It is not a means of pain control.

CHIROPRACTIC helps the body function to ITS maximum capability by allowing the nervous system to have better control over all the tissues of the body.

It may take a person days, months or years of care to regain this balance.

Please do not expect an instant cure. Time is vital.

-Joseph A. LaBarbera, D.C., Utica, NY

within chiropractic, the evidence is strong that these changes do occur.

Chiropractic is far more than a simple skeletal adjustment; chiropractic theory is based on the body's inherent desire for wholeness and proper functioning.

The changes in the neurological system alone that chiropractic can bring to the child with autism are tremendously important. Even a slight reduction in OCD behaviors, for example, can give children a better quality of life and improve their ability to learn.

Each child is unique and no one strategy will be effective for all individuals on the autism spectrum. If your child has sensory integration challenges, chiropractic has proven to be an effective treatment method to help these children make sense of their sensory world. Take your child to a doctor of chiropractic and see for yourself the changes that the adjustment can bring.

[NOTE: All chiropractors are trained in child adjusting. However, there are specialists in the field who have extensive training in pediatric development and autism. They are graduates of a three-year postgraduate program leading to Diplomate status. If you are interested in finding a doctor of chiropractic for your child, or you would like to speak to a doctor of chiropractic about your child's condition, contact the International Chiropractors Association at (800) 423-4690 for a referral.]

NEUROLOGICAL FEEDBACK

Many children with autism have obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) or OCD-like behaviors as part of their functioning. These repetitive actions not only impair their quality of life, but they can be injurious to the child. Tics, flapping, echolalia, head banging etc. can often prevent the child from learning and from participating in activities. In addition to being a self-soothing mechanism, OCD activity is done in order for the child to feel where his body ends and the rest of the world begins (proprioception). The chiropractic adjustment allows the child to receive input from the outside to the spine, then to the brain and again back to the spine. This feedback loop can begin to replace the OCD activity. An interesting note: in chiropractic literature there is ample history with respect to OCD activities, such as head banging on the crib, as being an attempt by the child to self-correct a subluxation which may have occurred at birth.

NEUROTRANSMISSION

There is evidence within chiropractic that performing an adjustment will increase the neurotransmission within the body. Increased neurotransmission can help the child perform higher cortical functions, including executive function activities. This increase in neurotransmission also can elevate the immunoglobulin levels in the child, which can give the child immunological protection from illness. While these results are presently being noted and explored

BIO

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