



Increasing Self-Management Skills in Adolescents and Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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What is Self-Management?

Self-management is a set of procedures that students can be taught to apply to their own behaviors to change them (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007). Self-management systems can be used to increase desired behaviors and/or decrease interfering behaviors of individuals with ASDs by teaching them how to: (a) monitor their own behavior, (b) record their performance, and (c) obtain reinforcement when their performance meets a pre-established behavior criterion (Busick & Neitzel, 2009). Before implementing a self-management system, be sure the student can perform the designated task. If there is a skill deficit, that skill needs to be taught before expecting the student to perform it independently and self-manage (Schulze, 2016). Self-monitoring is the most commonly used self-management intervention with students with ASD and has been used to improve on-task behavior, task engagement, academic productivity, and various social behaviors, such as social initiations (Carr et al., 2014). Self-monitoring has two basic parts: 1) self-observation, and 2) self-recording (Schulze, 2016). Learning to self-regulate is a developmental process that can be learned over time through direct instruction and practice opportunities (Hampshire, Butera, & Bellini, 2016). In teaching the student to use the self-management system, we need to model how to observe the specific behavior and how to record data. "Learners need to be taught how to record at the appropriate time and to do so accurately. An effective strategy to teach appropriate and accurate recording is for teachers to model examples of correct and incorrect behavior for the learner [...] and then assist the learner (via prompting) to record whether the modeled behavior they observed was an example of correct or incorrect behavior" (Busick & Neitzel, 2009). We need to reinforce students for self-managing and fade our prompts as quickly as possible in order to reduce the chances of prompt dependency or learned helplessness (Hampshire, Butera, & Bellini, 2016).

Implications for Practice

There is an increase in students with ASD being educated within the general education classroom setting. Teaching students how to self-manage their own behaviors will help decrease the time and energy general education teachers, para educators, and parents take to ensure students with ASD are on-task and fully participating (Schulze, 2016).

Steps to Teach

- (1) Prepare the specific system to be implemented
 - (2) Teach the learner to use the system
 - (3) Implement the system with adult support
 - (4) Promote learner independence with the system
- (Busick & Neitzel, 2009: http://www.autisminternetmodules.org/up_doc/Self-ManagementSteps10-29-09.pdf).
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Summary

"Self-management is a set of procedures with a strong evidence base that can promote skill development and independence in these students, especially given the nature of the deficits that students with ASD often grapple with, such as problems with organization, sustained attention, and task persistence. Implementation of self-management procedures is advantageous to both general educators and special educators as well in that it lessens the amount of time and effort necessary to directly manage student behavior (Schulze, 2016)". It may take a little more effort in the beginning of teaching a new self-management system, but with the increase in independence, on-task behaviors, task completion with increased accuracy, and decreased instances of problematic behaviors, the effort pays off in a substantially decreased need for individual adult supervision. Teaching students to use self-management systems such as self-monitoring data sheets can have a very positive impact on all students, especially with the increased number of students with ASD in general education settings.

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