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# Homeschooling a Child with Asperger's (Part 3)

Tags: Asperger's HSLDA special needs struggling learner

The incidence of children with Asperger's Syndrome is increasing, but many parents are finding comfort and success for these challenged youths. In the February 2009 HSLDA Struggling Learner Newsletter titled, "Homeschooling a Child with Asperger's Syndrome", we focused on the biological interventions that parents of Asperger's children have found helpful. Then, in the July issue, we turned our attention toward beneficial educational and social interventions. Today, we will address the topic of frequently recommended and necessary therapies.

**Therapies**

Should your homeschool program include working with therapists? Many parents surveyed feel comfortable enough to work on most of their child's issues at home. Others feel that much is gained by having their child work with therapists once or twice a week.

**1. Occupational Therapy**
This type of help has received the most favorable comments from parents. Most helpful is sensory integration therapy, which teaches parents the "brushing technique" to help an overly responsive child modulate his or her responses to outside stimuli.

Sensory Integration Issues: If your child's main need is in the sensory integration (SI) area, parents have found that there are many ways to incorporate SI therapy into the homeschooling day. They include a strong "sensory diet" into their child's day by using such methods as a spinning seat, trampoline, having the child sit under cushions while watching a video or being read to, having the child go barefoot in the grass, or, for more tactilely sensitive children, putting on lotion or giving back rubs.

Other parents have found that using home therapeutics such as The Listening Program helps modulate their child's sensory system. Many parents have also learned the benefit of nutritional interventions to feed their child's nervous system so that it gives more balanced signals to the child's brain and body. (See "Homeschooling the Child with Asperger Syndrome" by Lise Pyles for more home therapy ideas.)

Fine Motor: For fine motor issues, parents often have their child peel fruit, open small packets, peel off stickers, shell peanuts, or do needlecraft. To improve the spatial and writing issues of the child, many parent use the "Writing Eight Exercise" designed to cross the midline, or "Handwriting Without Tears".

Gross Motor: An Asperger's child with gross motor issues often doesn't participate in gym classes in public school. At home, however, parents can do much to help a child in this area. Examples of gross motor therapies include biking, horseback riding, skateboarding, karate, swimming, and gymnastics.

**2. Speech**
Children with Asperger's Syndrome often do not need the more traditional form of speech therapy, such as help with articulation errors, but they tend to need help with more pragmatic (practical, conversational) speech encouragement. A speech therapist, in this case, can help the Asperger's child learn to take turns in conversation and understand idioms and more common expressions that are used in everyday conversational speech.

For parents who want to help their child at home in addition to, or in place of, seeing a speech therapist, they can help them with these pragmatic social conversational skills, using many of the very good resources available. There are some very

popular books, such as "Social Skills Activities for Special Children" by Darlene Mannix, or "Navigating the Social World" by Jeannie McAfee, with its excellent social conversational skills material.

The social story concept, developed by Carol Gray, is a formula-based written story to work through social conversations in various situations. These stories can be found in her book, "The New Social Story Book." You can also visit her website for sample stories and guidelines. Parents can use the CD sets and DVDs that demonstrate various social settings and give methods for the child to interact appropriately. As you watch these DVDs together, you can stop them, and practice with your Asperger's child the conversational models that are provided. This gives the child, particularly the teen, confidence, when done in the privacy of his or her own home (http://www.hslda.org/elink.asp?id=6845 and http://www.hslda.org/elink.asp?id=6846). As with all videos, the parent should watch it first, to approve all content.

**How do I pay for special therapy and where do I go?**

If a parent decides to do outside therapy with their child, HSLDA recommends that parents seek private therapy services for their child, whenever possible, to avoid the many entanglements that can occur when a homeschooled child receives services through the public school system. However, remember that the most important objective is meeting the needs of the child. If you are a member of HSLDA, then you can contact one of the special needs coordinators, and they will help you find a therapist in your area. For more information on outside therapies and how to pay for them, go to http://www.hslda.org/elink.asp?id=6847 .

1. Many times a family's insurance will cover part of the speech or OT therapy, especially when it has been recommended by the child's physician.
2. There are many charitable organizations that are happy to help parents provide services for their special needs child. Look in your phone book for Shriners hospitals; Scottish Rite facilities; Easter Seals; Elks organization.
3. The Home School Foundation has some monies set aside specifically to help families with children with special needs meet part of the cost of providing those needs.

Homeschooling is challenging, but it is also very rewarding. Many parents find that by supplementing their child's academic needs with specialized therapies, either on their own or through the help of a private professional therapist, wonderful strides can be made for their Asperger's-affected kids. Remember that you are not alone in your decision to homeschool your child with Asperger's Syndrome. HSLDA's special needs coordinators are here to come along side you and make this a comfortable, successful trip. We observe, and parents report, remarkable changes in their child's demeanor, comfort level, learning and social interactions when they take the step to homeschool their wonderful Asperger's child.

**Resources**

- "Choosing Home" by Martha Kennedy Hartnett
- OASIS (Online Asperger Syndrome Information & Support ) (very thorough website)

**This resource is provided by the Home School Legal Defense Association's Struggling Learner's newsletter as a service to the homeschooling community.**

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**Author:** Dianne Craft
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