

DIR:Floortime, The Need



Unlocking Potential Through DIR

October 2019

Edition 1

Meeting Their Needs

Reflections by Kate Bailey (OT)

With the staggering increase in children diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) or showing signs of ASD, it has never been more pertinent to understand this diverse population. At this stage in my 30 + years as an occupational therapist, I am coming into contact with more and more educators and professionals who are seeing children with red flags for ASD (impairment in social interaction and communication, sensory processing difficulties, restricted, repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior and interests).

They express their struggle to perform their roles, as they know them. Professionals and educators alike, have had training in their relevant fields which have not prepared them for working sensitively and effectively with this population of children. Having learned behavioural techniques and strategies, they still ask, "Yes, but how do I work with these children, how do I know what is underlying these behaviours, how do I get their attention, how do I engage with them?"

DIR/Floortime provides a valuable key and has taught me that our greatest tool is ourselves and the relationship we develop to contain and support regulation and shared attention, first and foremost.

The challenges experienced by parents, therapists and teachers alike have been described so aptly in ICDL's recent newsletter, dated September 2019.

<http://www.icontact-archive.com/archive?c=207723&f=19537&s=24708&m=456674&t=878ec00e fea773e571107c5c1968e688c4fde0a91aa247e54c2e50adbcfca35b>

"What could be more fun than making funny noises and pulling funny faces which in turn gets engagement, participation and not to mention giggles from the class. If it didn't work... I wouldn't use it..." *Michelle Pellaton – Teacher @ The Key School, Parktown*

Meet Our Team

- *Kerry Wallace*



*Founder and
Chairperson*

1. **Where do you live and what do you do** – *I live in Perth (Australia) and I am an occupational therapist*
2. **What is your current hobby** - *I'm loving snorkeling*
3. **Your worst thing to eat** - *Mopani Worms*
4. **If you could go anywhere in the world where would it be** - *I would love to go to Geli Meno ☺☺*
5. **What is your favorite way to relax** – *nothing beats a full body massage (got to love the deep pressure)*

Why Choose DIR:Floortime For Your Child?

Parents need to be empowered

(Cheryl Fisher, OT)

I recently attended a talk presented to parents regarding a new approach to therapy. The prevailing thought that I came away with is, parents are desperately seeking help for their children with special needs. They want to feel like they have some role in the therapeutic process, more than just arriving at therapy sessions on time!

There are so many 'new' treatment options available and the extensive use of google has made a plethora of information available to parents at the click of the button, but as we know not everything we read online is true, good or even helpful. Many of these 'new' treatment options are based in allied medical science, for example physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and psychology; however not all of the practitioners have the necessary qualifications. Some of these methods do not have the research behind them to make them successful. Many of these options also promise 'healing' or 'cures' for conditions such as Autism or Down Syndrome while scientifically we know that this is not possible. What is possible however is helping each child unlock their true potential to enable them to function at their optimal level as they progress through life.

As an OT my first experience with the DIR model was when Spotlight Trust brought a few of the Profectum Academy to South Africa in 2015. What stood out to me the most, and that has really been reiterated throughout my DIR training, is that the DIR:Floortime Model is based in science. The model was developed by Dr Stanley Greenspan (Psychiatrist) and Dr Serena Wieder (psychologist), and while the model takes into account the need for a multidisciplinary approach, it does not claim to replace any one therapy. Rather the model aims to inform and empower therapists to better engage and relate to clients. More importantly the model encourages the **coaching and training of parents to become the primary play partner** in the child's world.

Becoming the primary play partner empowers parents through understanding their child's unique set of strengths and weaknesses. This allows them to enter into their child's world, where previously they have felt excluded. It promotes the continued therapeutic process at home, which in turn promotes improved overall development of the child.

Once a parent feels empowered this gives them the confidence to take the lead in selecting a school, setting goals and even choosing therapies to add or remove from their child's programme.



As a parent of a child with Down Syndrome I have had first hand experience with the benefits of the DIR model. When our son was first born my husband had no idea how to interact with him as he did not develop eye gaze or babbling at the rate a neurotypical child would. I would often find him just holding our son in his arm and not making any attempt to engage with him because he just didn't know how. I have sent him on parent training workshops and I have spent time teaching him the basic principles of the DIR model and the change in his relationship with our son has been remarkable. The model has also helped to empower our extended family to connect with him. He is doing so well developmentally at the moment. I attribute this to the DIR model and being able to understand his profile and relate on his level to regulate him, engage with him and support his development of intentional actions.

Profectum Academy (of which Spotlight Trust is an affiliate) is so committed to empowering parents to engage and relate to their children that they have developed a FREE parent tool box

<https://profectum.org/parent-toolbox/>

Upcoming workshops

EAST LONDON | 26 – 27 OCT 2019 | 8 COLLEGE STREET

JOHANNESBURG | 23 – 24 NOV 2019 | 200 BRYANSTON DRIVE

Contact us today on info@spotlight.org.za for more information or to book your spot. Follow us on



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