

Developmental social-pragmatic model

At a glance: Developmental social-pragmatic model	
Type of therapy	Developmental
The claim	Improves communication
Suitable for	Children with ASD
Research rating Find out more about this rating system in our FAQs .	 <p>Some research shows positive effects, more research needed.</p>
Time Estimate of the total time for family in hours per week and duration.	The time commitment required will depend on the type of program used and the specific needs of the child.
Cost Estimate of cost to family per session/item or week.	The cost of this approach will depend on the type of DSP intervention being used.

Visit the [Autism Service Pathfinder](#) to browse Service Providers information.

About this intervention

What is it?

The DSP model is not a therapy in itself. Rather, it is an approach to intervention that uses everyday interactions between caregivers and children to promote communication.

The model uses techniques derived from [Applied Behaviour Analysis \(ABA\)](#), such as [incidental teaching](#). Other interventions that use a DSP perspective include the [More Than Words® program](#) and the [DIR®/Floortime™ model](#).

Who is it for?

The DSP approach is used with children with ASD. This approach is recommended for children who

already have some basic communication skills. Specific age limits might apply depending on the type of DSP intervention you choose.

What is it used for?

DSP interventions are used to help children with autism initiate communication and engage in spontaneous communication. This approach also aims to improve social interactions, such as turn-taking.

Where does it come from?

The DSP approach is derived from research on communication development in typical children. Research on its use for children with ASD has been growing since 2005.

What is the idea behind it?

The DSP approach is based on developmental theory and research on interactions between typically developing children and their caregivers.

The key idea behind the DSP model is that caregivers can improve the development of a child's social communication through their responses during interactions with that child.

DSP interventions don't focus so much on the form of children's communication – that is, it's not about turning non-verbal communication into verbal communication. Rather, a DSP approach looks at the purpose of communication – that is, what children are trying to get out of any communication.

In a DSP framework, all communication efforts (words, gestures or sounds) are rewarded in order to encourage future attempts.

What does it involve?

DSP interventions typically happen in the child's home, and tend to be delivered by parents or other primary caregivers.

In a typical DSP intervention, a setting is created to interest the child. For example, a play area is set up with the child's preferred toys. The parents or caregivers:

- encourage the child to interact – for example, by putting a favourite toy out of reach, so the child must ask for it
- respond to every communication attempt – for example, the child is given the toy regardless of how she asks for it (it doesn't matter whether she grunts, points or speaks)
- might model another way of communicating where the purpose is more clear
- use words to express their feelings and label how the child might be feeling (for example, 'I'm really happy you asked for that toy. It looks like you feel happy too')
- adjust how they interact (based on the child's developmental level) to ensure the child understands.

DSP interventions can be very time-intensive, involving many hours a day. Depending on the goals set for the child, this approach could go on for several years.

Cost considerations

The cost of a DSP program to a family will depend on:

- the individual program
- the structure of the program
- the service that delivers the program.

Does it work?

Some research has shown positive effects from this approach, but more high-quality studies are needed. The techniques used in this program are based on ABA principles, which are well supported by research.

Who practises this method?

The type of professionals involved in DSP interventions will differ depending on the DSP intervention used.

Parent education, training, support and involvement

Parents usually play an active role in DSP interventions, which are typically delivered in the home.

Training and other supports might be available, depending on the intervention.

Where can I find a practitioner?

Contact your [state autism association](#) and ask them to recommend a service or practitioner.

You could also ask the professionals who work with your child whether they use DSP techniques to encourage communication.

Rated

(0 ratings)

GLOSSARY

Incidental teaching

A technique used in some autism spectrum disorder (ASD) therapies. With incidental teaching, naturally occurring situations are used to help the child learn. For example, if the child chooses a toy with multi-coloured balls, the person working with the child might use it as a chance to talk about colours, and ask the child to request the balls by colour. This can help the child develop language and other skills important to development. Incidental teaching is sometimes referred to as using 'teachable moments'.

More to explore

Testing interventions for autism spectrum disorder

Therapy hours: how many are enough for autism spectrum disorder?

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