

# TEACCH – A structured Approach Towards Autism

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**V**isual information is more easily processed by people with autism than verbal information. This statement was established as the foundation for structured teaching. For students with autism, by Eric Schoppler in 1966. This study was continued further and to the development of TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autism and Communication handicapped Children).

## WHERE ?

Producing or modifying the environment where to treat students with autism is very crucial.

In general it must be calming in effect and conducive to the results expected. As the autistic student tends to become over stimulated from too many sensory input, environment must be stripped from all stimuli. All clutter must be removed, walls bar and sound limited to own voice only. Carpeting the area in one colour which is not bright in intensity is a good idea. This will insulate sound and echo as well as produce a clear idea of space available. Visual barriers are very important to increase the attention and concentration to the task in question. Areas should be labeled, as they give a clear indication to the student what to do in that area.

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## **WHEN?**

The autistic student has poor concept of time and also does not know when to start, what to start and when to stop. Routine is their motto therefore a time table or as better refereed a schedule is necessary. The optimum meaningful communication system needs to be identified. This is done in liaison with the Speech and Language Pathologists. Media used may vary from object, photos, pictures, symbols to written format. The students move left to right of the schedule. This mode of performing is kept constant at home, work and play giving the student a structure in his life.

## **HOW ?**

In dealing with the autistic student, one must build up a relationship based on confidence and calm feelings. The motto to be followed is "Speak softly and work quietly". Instructions given must be direct using only key words and giving little or no notice to grammatical corrections. For example instead of saying "Please, can you bring me that ball ?" one would simply state "Get Ball". Strengths of the students must be assessed and worked upon.

These are used in order that the student becomes productive and earns a living using this strength. Negative behavior is never corrected using negative reinforcement. It is rather ignored and modify behavior to reinforce positive behavior.

## **WHY ?**

The answer of this question comes automatically. Structure decreases confusion and aggression, makes students more productive as activities are given their meaning. This holds given that one bears in mind the above. Autism cannot be fought as one will loose. In planning out one must always allow self stimulation. It should be modified to a more socially acceptable state.

## **CONCLUSION:**

This approach has given satisfactory results both international as well as locally. At present this approach is being applied by the Eden Foundation with students with autism. Should you need more information write to:-

**STEP PROGRAMME,  
THE EDEN FOUNDATION,  
BULEBELL, ZEJTUN.**

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