



**Nurture Pods**

EARLY INTERVENTION CENTRE FOR CHILDREN

# NewsPod

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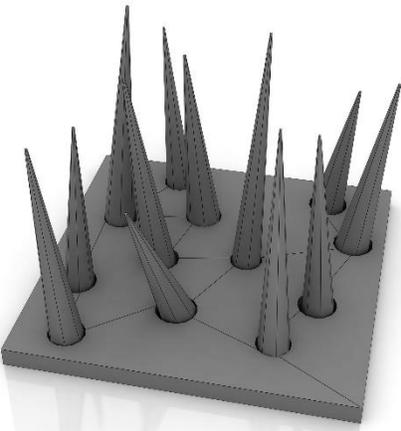
## **Editorial Team**

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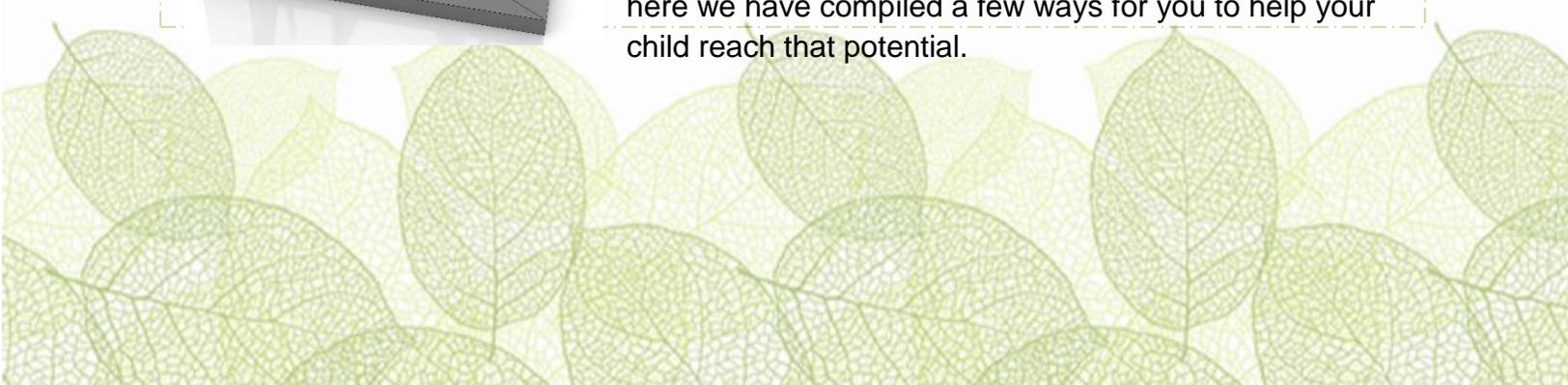
*Year 2019*

## ***Navigating Autism***

We tend to generalize people's skill levels in all areas of their lives based on their ability in one area – for example predicting one's comprehension ability based on their verbal fluency. However, this isn't true for many people on the autism spectrum. Instead, their skill profiles are more likely to be 'spiky' or 'uneven', with strengths in certain areas and difficulties in others. This is consistent with the description of individuals with autism as specialists rather than generalists. Unfortunately, this spiky profile often goes unrecognized by support services, especially with the verbal ability of a person being tied to their general capabilities, leading people with autism to feeling misunderstood.

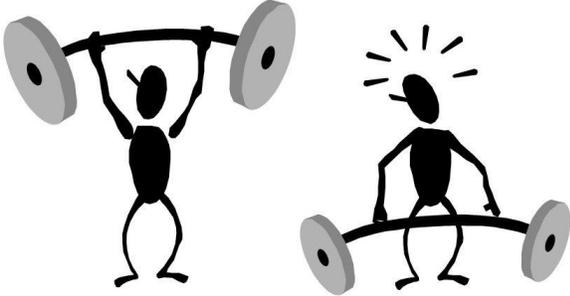


A hand can be used as an analogy for spiky profiles, with fingers representing an individual's different abilities. Sometimes a finger can be abnormally long or short, causing the hand to look distorted and affecting its function; it can still function as a hand, just not always optimally. We believe that everyone has the potential to perform to the best of their abilities, and here we have compiled a few ways for you to help your child reach that potential.



## 1. Focus on both strengths and weaknesses

It is common to want to focus on tasks that your child finds difficult, to even out their skill profile. However, this should not come at the cost of neglecting those areas that they excel in. Concentrating on only potential areas for improvement could breed resentment and anxiety, as it might make them feel like they a failure and impact their self-esteem. It could also negatively affect their love for learning.



By focusing on both areas of strength and areas for improvement, you can also help to boost your child's confidence, and help him to enjoy learning, while encouraging him to improve in his weaker areas.

## 2. Use Positive Reinforcements



Rather than simply punishing undesirable behavior, positive reinforcements for desired behaviors such as listening to the teacher may have better effects in the long term. This is done by giving the child a reward immediately after he performs a desired behavior, with the aim of increasing such behavior from the child in the future.

When choosing a reward, keep in mind that each child is unique! Think of what your child likes, and what would motivate him. Bear in mind that the reinforcer should be practical – something that he does not have easy access to, and is feasible as a reward in the situation where the behavior is elicited.

Some examples of positive reinforcement include preferred activities, verbal praise, food treats and privileges.



### 3. Introduce Social Skills



Social skills are key to understanding the social situations around us, and help us navigate the social world. If your child struggles to understand how relationships work and different social conventions, it may impede not only their ability to relate to the people around them, but perhaps their comprehension of any broken social conventions in English texts.

For people on the autism spectrum, it may be harder for them to understand these conventions implicitly; these skills need to be taught explicitly, and will help them in social relationships and other academic subjects such as English, Literature, and History, to name a few.

## Our Services

### *Centre for Child Development and Early Intervention*

This programme helps your child with special needs learn the national school curriculum in a structured learning environment, with a programme individualized to their own needs. Your child will either attend a structured class or preparatory class, based on his/her needs. The structured class targets various developmental domains, while the preparatory class is aimed at preparing children to transition into mainstream schools, be it kindergartens or primary schools.

### *Home Intervention Programme*

This is an intensive programme where one-to-one support is given to help your child develop essential cognitive, social, academic, communicative, and self-help skills, among others. It is based on the principles of Applied Behavioral Analysis, which has extensive research evidence supporting its efficacy in helping children with special needs.



### *School Shadow Support Programme*

For children with difficulty adapting to new environments, the school shadowing support programme aims to help your child increase his/her social interaction skills, and ultimately be independent. This is done through helping your child develop school-appropriate behaviors that help him in social interactions and academics.

### *Social Skills Programme*

Games, video-modelling and role-play are just some of the tools used in our social skills classes. They are used to build social competencies and communication abilities, while letting your child have fun!

### **References**

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