

ASD Module Script

Module 5: ASD Across the Lifespan

ASD Across the Lifespan: Prognosis and Outcomes: Welcome to the module on ASD across the lifespan. As we discussed earlier in Module 1, Autism Spectrum Disorder Characteristics, ASDs are lifelong developmental disorders and result in an alteration in the trajectory of an individual's life course. In this section, we will discuss some of the historical factors contributing to ASD across the lifespan, patterns of change in prognosis, and variables related to positive outcomes.

ASD Across the Lifespan: There are three factors that have been recognized in the literature as contributing to the importance of ASD across the lifespan, both directly and indirectly altering the life course of persons diagnosed with ASD. The first is the increase in effective early intervention services. Early detection has been highlighted during this talk, as it has come to be recognized as key for improved outcomes. Increases in language, social skills, and scholastic abilities that may be brought about through early intervention services are leading to greater functioning for children who receive an ASD diagnosis. Next, educational advocacy and legislation that has occurred at the state and national levels, as well as the educational advocacy that individual families and support personnel engage in have led to students with an ASD diagnosis in K through 12 education receiving more effective instruction and inclusion that is more meaningful. Finally, aging with a developmental disability, especially an ASD, has become an increasingly important area of discussion. This issue came fully into the limelight as deinstitutionalization took hold in the 50's and 60's. Accompanying this was the rise of community-based living and services. Prior to this, people with ASD and other developmental disabilities were not fully integrated into the community; however, this shift, coupled with the current rise in prevalence, has given way to a host of new programs and funding designed to support individuals with autism as they age.

Prognosis: Patterns of Change: Concerning prognosis, the first areas to consider are the distinct patterns of change that occur in each diagnostic domain. The social and communication domains appear to demonstrate the greatest improvement over time. This is in contrast to the area of behavior, specifically stereotyped behavior. Repetitive and stereotyped behavior such as repetitive motor movements, inflexible routines, repetitive play, and perseverative speech, tend to experience less change over time and are thought to have a different developmental trajectory.

Prognosis: Positive Outcomes: Finally, the literature on positive outcomes for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders is often broken into those individuals with

high functioning Autism and Asperger's versus those with low functioning Autism. There is very little research that has been done longitudinally, with outcomes being reported during brief periods of time. The research reported here concern outcomes during a period of time between two and seven years. It is found that positive outcomes are related to cognitive abilities, specifically non-verbal problem solving, expressive language, intelligibility, and language comprehension. Overall, it is the factors of cognitive ability and language that are related to the most positive outcomes for individuals with ASD.

Summary: ASD Across the Lifespan: You have now completed Module 5: ASD Across the Lifespan. In this module we covered factors related to ASD across the lifespan, patterns of domain change, and positive outcomes. Please proceed to the post assessment.
