

# **Effects of a parent-implemented Developmental Reciprocity Treatment Program for children with autism spectrum disorder**

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Developmental approaches to autism treatment aim to establish strong interpersonal relationships through joint play. These approaches have emerging empirical support; however, there is a need for further research documenting the procedures and demonstrating their effectiveness. This pilot study evaluated changes in parent behavior and child autism symptoms following a 12-week Developmental Reciprocity Treatment parent training program. Twenty-two children with autism spectrum disorder between 2 and 6 years of age participated in 12 weekly sessions with their primary caregiver. Parent training sessions covered topics including introduction to developmental approaches, supporting attention and motivation, sensory regulation and sensory-social routines, imitation/building nonverbal communication, functional language development, and turn taking. Results indicated improvement in aspects of parent empowerment and social quality of life. Improvement in child core autism symptoms, such as social responsiveness, word use, as well as compulsive and restricted behaviors, were also observed. No differences in sensory sensitivity were found following treatment. Findings from this pilot study indicate that the developmental reciprocity approach shows promise as an autism treatment. Future controlled trials of this developmentally-based intervention are clearly needed.