

## Pleasant Presence:

### An effective theme in a group positive training for High Functioning Autistic children

Autism is a spectrum, known as neuro-developmental disorders. Problems in interaction and communication are the main characteristics which can be found in all members of this spectrum. This kind of problem works as a vicious circle, in a way that lack of social skills cause unpleasant feeling and isolation. This isolation weakens them and adds fear and other unpleasant experiences in social situations. Therefore, having positive emotions about interaction would be very important especially for High- Functioning Autistic (HFA) children, who have less mental issues in comparison to the rest. The main study aimed to investigate efficacy of a group positive training for HFA children. Five groups of HFA children (totally 27 girls and boys, aged between 4 to 6 years) attended in art-based positive group trainings in Emotional, Social, and Cognitive phases. Average time of these weekly sessions was 70 minutes. Whole time of each session was recorded and mothers could observe the sessions. At the end of each session, trainers had a 20 minutes discussion for analyzing the function, abilities, disabilities, especial help needs, and the best strategies to teach the skills to each child. In order to investigate the effective consequences of this group training, data were gathered using trainers' reports, interview with mothers, recorded videos, and observational and reflexive notes. Data analysis was done in a six step thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) while components of trustworthiness in qualitative research were under consideration during the process. The results showed that the pleasant presence is one of the effective themes in this group positive training for High Functioning Autistic children. Facial and gestural happiness, positive cooperation, reduced behavioral problems during the sessions, interest in entering the class, passionate volunteering and involving in activities are five subthemes of the pleasant presence theme. These findings would be helpful to understand phenomenological world of HFA children, and to design group programs for them with the aim of increasing their positive skills.

## Art-based positive group trainings in Emotional, Social, and Cognitive phases





### Previous presentations

- Taghva, N., Bagherian, S., Pouretamad, H.R. & Shafiee, M. **The Efficacy of Group Emotional Training Program for Autism.** World Congress of Behaviour and Cognitive Therapies, Boston, 2-5 June 2010.
- Taghva, N., Bagherian, S., Pouretamad, H.R. . **The Impact of Art-Based Group Training on the Socio-Emotional Skills in High-functioning Autistic Children.** International Conference on Child and Adolescent Psychopathology, London, July 2010.
- Taghva, N., Bagherian, S., Pouretamad, H.R. . **The efficacy of a group cognitive training for high functioning autistic children.** European Congress of Psychiatry, Vienna, March 2011.
- Taghva, N., Mahabadi, S. **Grammatical deficits in persian and english-speaking autistic children: similarities and differences.** European Congress of Psychiatry, Prague, March 2012.
- Khosravizadeh, p., Mahabadi, S., Taghva, N. **Common Areas of Speech Problems in Persian Speaking Autistic Children.** Language, literature, and linguistics, Singapore, July 2012.
- Taghva, N., Mahabadi, S. International Congress of child and adolescent psychiatry, Tehran, October 2012.



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