CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

Connor

Connor is a five-year-old boy with Asperger disorder. Connor currently attends a general education kindergarten classroom. Connor began speaking in full sentences by eighteen months of age. He has an extensive vocabulary and enjoys talking with adults. Connor demonstrates intense interest in both trains and airplanes and enjoys reading books on these topics. Connor often becomes distracted by his intense interests and attempts to talk about trains or airplanes at inappropriate times.

Connor’s parents, Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman, have difficulty getting Connor ready for school. When Connor is supposed to be getting ready for school, he becomes distracted and reads books on trains or airplanes. When his parents attempt to redirect him, he verbally refuses to stop reading and get ready for school. Consequently, Mrs. Hoffman provides physical assistance with all steps of his morning routine, even though he can do most of the steps on his own. The morning routine of having to provide physical and verbal prompts for dressing, brushing teeth, and eating breakfast creates a great deal of stress for Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman, as well as Connor.

Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman have sought the support of the behavioral specialist who provides support to learners with ASD, Mr. Adams, in their local education district. Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman have met with Mr. Adams to discuss their concerns and to secure recommendations for helping Connor get ready for school independently.

Step 1. Determine the Needs of the Family

Mr. Adams schedules a consultation with Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman. The purpose of the consultation is to learn more about their concerns and needs. Further, he would like to learn more about the family dynamics, Connor’s strengths, interaction patterns between Connor and his parents, and current strategies used at home. Mr. Adams wants to ensure he has an accurate and thorough understanding of the parents’ needs and priorities therefore, he uses a family information form to interview them. Mr. Adams takes notes while interviewing the parents. Because the morning routine is such a difficult time and results in elevated stress for all family members, Mr. Adams spends a great deal of time focusing on this time of the day, gathering detailed information about the routine.

Mr. Adams would really like to see the morning routine for himself to gain additional information. However, he realizes his presence in the morning may likely alter Connor’s behavior, and his observation may not provide a realistic view of the situation. He discusses this with Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman, and the three adults decide that Mr. Hoffman will video record the morning routine. To ensure sufficient footage is provided, Mr. Hoffman agrees to video record three separate mornings.

Step 2. Selecting Goals
After viewing the videos, a second consultation is scheduled. This consultation takes place in Mr. Adams’ office. The purpose of this consultation is to outline appropriate goals for Connor as well as his parents. The parents and Mr. Adams outline a number of goals to make getting ready for school more pleasant and efficient. Next, they prioritize the goals based on the immediate impact on the family. Mr. Adams writes the goals in observable and measurable terms:

*Using a visual schedule, Connor will independently dress himself in 5 minutes or less every week day morning, putting on pants, shirt, socks, and shoes for two months.*

*Using a visual schedule, Connor will independently use the bathroom and brush his teeth every week day morning in 5 minutes or less for two months.*

Additionally, it was determined Connor’s parents would benefit from goals designed to improve their ability to redirect him effectively and increase his cooperation during daily routines. The team develops the following goals:
*On week day mornings, Connor’s parents will review the visual schedule (photos and words) that depict the steps of brushing his teeth and getting dressed with Connor after he has eaten breakfast and prior to going upstairs to get ready.*
*When Connor independently completes his morning routine, his parents will provide praise and time to play with his trains.*
*When giving directions to Conner, his parents will first make sure they have his attention by getting close to him and stating his name.*
*When Connor follows simple directions given by either parent anytime during his day, his parents will praise him for following directions.*

**Step 3. Developing the Intervention Plan**

Using information derived from the interview, videos, and ongoing discussions, Mr. Adams creates an intervention plan in collaboration with Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman. Taking into account the needs of the family, he develops a plan that is easy to implement and will ultimately reduce family stress. This is especially important since the intervention plan will be implemented in the morning when stress can already be high.

The intervention plan provides step-by-step instructions for implementation. The intervention will take place within the context of the natural morning routine and will employ a variety of instructional strategies. First, a task analysis will be used, outlining the steps Connor is to complete. For example, in his first goal, Connor is to get dressed independently. The task analysis contains the following steps:

1. Remove pajamas
2. Put pajamas on hook in bathroom
3. Put on pants
4. Put on shirt
5. Put on socks
6. Put on shoes
CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

By creating and using a task analysis, the steps are clearly outlined and are implemented in the same order each time. Additionally, Connor can use the task analysis as a visual support to provide direction through the steps. Second, the plan includes a description of how to prompt Connor effectively through the steps of the routine. Third, reinforcement is used to increase motivation and encourage compliant behavior.

Mr. Adams creates a data collection system that is succinct and easy to implement in the context of the morning routine. He decides to have Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman keep occurrence data for each step of the routine. Because the intervention is being implemented in the morning, Mr. Adams knows the data must be collected quickly. Mr. Adams crafts one data sheet for getting dressed and a second data sheet for toileting and brushing teeth. On each data sheet, he lists the steps Connor is to complete and provides a column to make a check mark if Connor completed the step independently.

Step 4. Training Parents

The three adults work together to develop a training program. Mr. Adams suggests using a combination training approach and Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman agree. First, Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman receive three hours of didactic instruction on prompting strategies and reinforcement. They receive this instruction in a group format with other parents of children with ASD. The training takes place in Mr. Adams’ office. Second, they receive individualized hands-on instruction to teach implementation of the intervention with Connor in two-hour blocks for four consecutive weeks. After much consideration, the team decides to conduct the hands-on training in Mr. Adam’s office. Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman expressed this desire because they believe there are a number of distractions in the home that would impede training effectiveness. Mr. Adams wants to ensure they are able to transfer learned skills to the home. Once again, he recommends video recording intervention sessions. Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman agree and are happy with the arrangement.

During the individual instruction, Mr. Adams provides a video analysis of the home tapes. After the analysis, he models various steps of the intervention and provides opportunities for both Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman to practice. Mr. Adams provides coaching to the parents and gives immediate feedback. At the end of each training session, the three adults spend approximately 10 minutes recapping the day’s training and outlining goals for the upcoming week.

Step 5. Implementing the Intervention

After completion of the didactic training and one week of the individual training, Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman begin implementing the intervention at home. At the completion of the session, they collect data and write down questions and concerns. They videotape intervention sessions two times a week.

Step 6. Progress Monitoring
Mr. Adams is able to monitor Mr. And Mrs. Hoffman’s performance through the video analysis conducted each week. He provides written and verbal feedback regarding steps implemented correctly as well as areas targeted for improvement. To ensure Connor is progressing, the three also analyze data. During each session, Mr. Adams provides the opportunity for Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman to ask questions and share concerns. Over time, Mr. Adams makes minor adjustments to the intervention plan as needed. After the four week training period, Mr. and Mrs. Connor feel confident about their ability to implement the intervention. Connor has made tremendous progress towards his goals. The team determines it is time to identify new goals. The team continues to focus on the morning routine as this area is still problematic. While Connor will now get dressed and will use the bathroom and brush his teeth with few reminders, he still requires a tremendous amount of assistance and redirection to eat breakfast.

The team develops the following new goals:

*Connor will independently eat his breakfast in 10 minutes or less every week day morning.*

With the incorporation of the new goal, the team decides to extend the training for another two weeks. This allows Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman to receive coaching and feedback on the new goals.

After two weeks, Connor has made additional progress. Connor will now get dressed, use the bathroom, and brush his teeth independently. He requires more prompting and redirection to eat breakfast, but progress is being made and the Hoffmans continue to work diligently.

Once again, the team decides to re-address Connor’s goals. They outline two additional goals related to daily routines. Because Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman have received such intensive training, they feel confident they can apply their newly acquired skills to these situations. To ensure the Hoffmans effectively apply the intervention, the team schedules monthly follow-up training sessions. Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman agree to bring videos that will be used for video analysis. Additionally, Mr. Adams provides his e-mail address and phone number in case they have questions that need immediate attention.