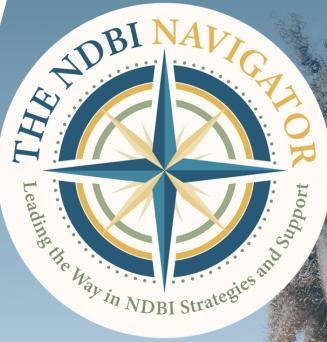


*The NDBI Navigator*

AUGUST 2025 | ISSUE 07

# Notes



Monthly Newsletter

*Leading the Way in*  
**NDBI**  
**Strategies**  
**& Support**

By The NDBI Navigator™

# Online Courses

*The NBDI Navigator Academy* | [courses.thendbinavigator.com](https://courses.thendbinavigator.com)



**BA30: Implementing the ESDM to Enhance Social Engagement in Young Autistic Children**

24 Lessons  
1 CEU



**ESDM Advanced Workshop Supplemental Modules**

97 Lessons  
8.5 CEUs



*Behavior Technicians, RBTs, Paraprofessionals*

**T19: NBDI Essentials for Autism Providers TECHNICIANS**

55 Lessons  
4 PDUs



*Behavior Technicians, RBTs, Paraprofessionals*

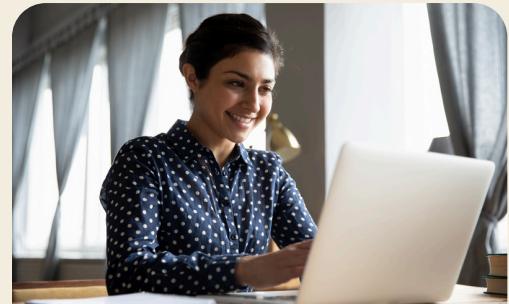
**T18. Patterns in Play (Autism Providers) TECHNICIANS**

23 Lessons  
1 PDU



**BA29: Patterns in Play: Using Play Schemas to Promote Engagement**

44 Lessons  
2 CEUs



**MC01: Writing ABA Session Notes Master Class MASTERCLASS**

40 Lessons  
3 CEUs



# Professional Membership

*Come for the Content—Stay for the Community*

*Unlock Career-Changing Support with the NDBI Essentials Membership!*



## Top-Tier Training at Your Fingertips

Access to exclusive, expert-led courses in NDBI and play-based learning



## Earn CEUs While You Learn

Earn BACB, QABA, and IBAO-approved credits every single month



## Live Q&As with Dr. Jamie—Twice a Month!

Ask your toughest questions, get real-time coaching, and stay on the cutting edge.



## A Private Professional Community

Share wins, troubleshoot challenges, and grow— together.



## The Ultimate Resource Vault

Hundreds of ready-to-use visuals, tools, resources, checklists, & handouts.



## Mentorship That Moves You Forward

Accelerate your confidence, sharpen your skills, & receive direct feedback.



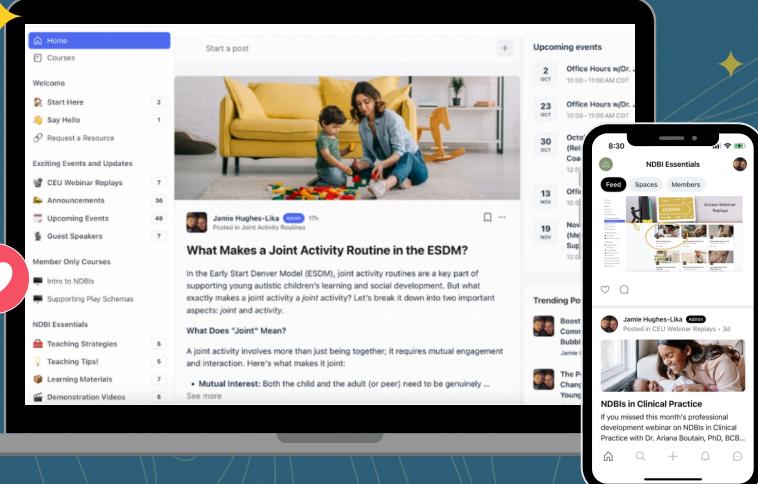
## All the Tools, None of the Overwhelm

Everything is streamlined, actionable, and designed to make your job easier



## One Membership Unlimited Growth.

Your all-in-one hub for training, mentorship, resources, and results.



*Scan to Learn More*

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[support@thendbinavigator.com](mailto:support@thendbinavigator.com)

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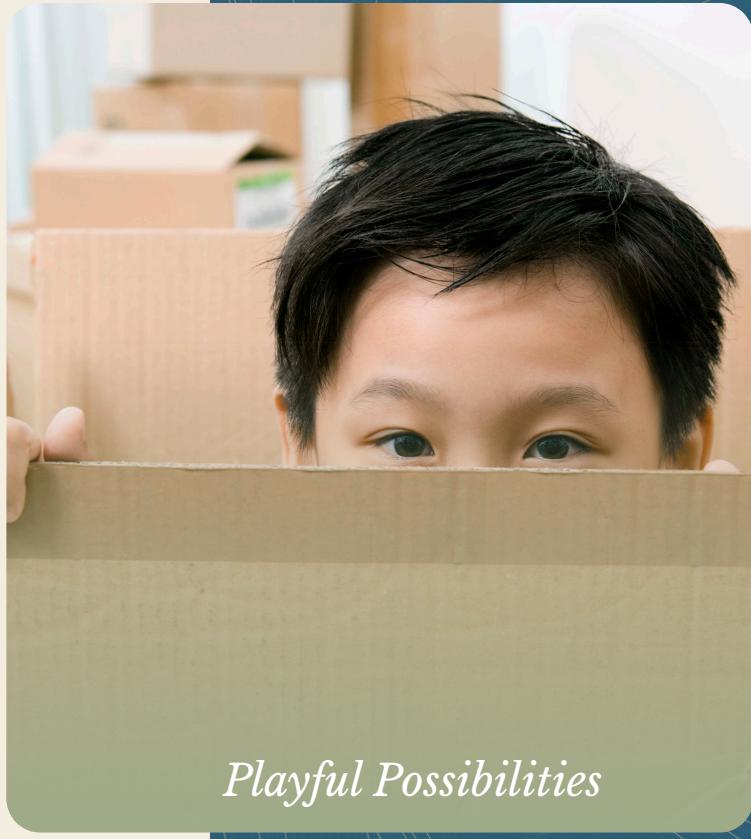
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*NDBI Events*

# Letter from the Editors

Dear NDBI Community,

Welcome to the August issue of The NDBI Navigator Notes! As summer begins to wind down, we're reminded that learning and connection can happen anywhere—whether during structured activities, everyday routines, or spontaneous moments of play. This month's content is all about making the most of those opportunities and knowing how to best support children through them.

Our Research Roundup spotlights a compelling new article by Kushner et al. (2025) examining changes in emotional dysregulation for children participating in Project ImPACT. The findings offer important insights into the ways caregiver-mediated NDBIs can impact not only social communication, but also reactivity and regulation.

In our How-To Hub, we focus on the art of scaffolding support—providing just the right amount of help to set a child up for success while still encouraging independence and problem-solving. You'll find practical strategies for adjusting support in real time based on each child's needs.



And in Ask & Answer, we respond to a reader's request for simple ways to weave NDBI strategies into everyday activities like snack time or getting dressed. We'll offer easy-to-use ideas that transform these familiar moments into rich opportunities for learning and connection.

Thank you for being part of this growing community with us. We hope this issue leaves you inspired to make the most of both the planned and unexpected moments that shape a child's learning journey.

## Dr. Jamie and Dr. Sienna

Jamie Hughes-Lika, PhD, BCBA-D, LBA, IBA  
Sienna Windsor, PhD, BCBA-D, LBA



Dr. Jamie



Dr. Sienna

# Research Roundup

## Research Highlights for Real-World Impact

### *Addressing Emotional Dysregulation Within NDBI for Young Autistic Children: Outcomes and Factors Related to Change*



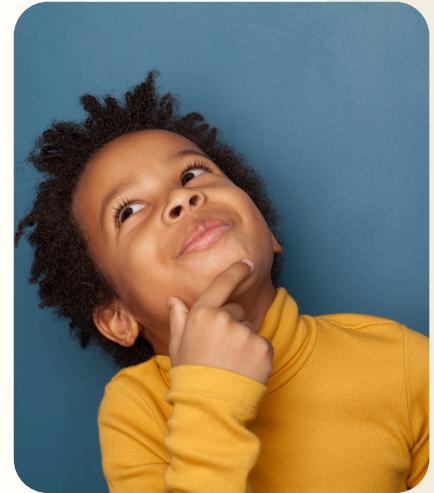
### *Key Takeaways*

This secondary analysis examined data from 111 caregiver-child dyads (ages 14–48 months) who participated in a 12–14 week Project ImPACT program. Caregivers were coached in developmental strategies (e.g., following the child's lead), behavioral strategies (e.g., prompting and reinforcing communication), and pacing strategies ("shaping the interaction" to align with the child's regulation and engagement). Emotional reactivity, social communication, and caregiver fidelity were assessed at the start and end of the program. Findings showed meaningful reductions in emotional dysregulation, with the greatest gains among children who began with high baseline reactivity. Improvements were most strongly linked to higher initial social engagement and caregivers' consistent, high-fidelity use of behavioral and pacing strategies. These results suggest that NDBIs like Project ImPACT can effectively support both emotion regulation and social communication within a single intervention, offering an efficient and impactful approach for young autistic children and their families.

Kushner, E. H., Holbrook, C. B., Hendrix, N. M., Douglas-Brown, J. D., & Pickard, K. E. (2025). Addressing Emotional Dysregulation Within NDBI for Young Autistic Children: Outcomes and Factors Related to Change. *Behavioral Sciences*, 15(7), 975.

# Reflection Questions

1. How could practices such as emotion labeling or teaching coping strategies be integrated into current NDBI implementation strategies, and in what ways might these practices extend beyond the scope of existing procedures?
2. The authors found that higher baseline social engagement was associated with greater reductions in dysregulation, especially for children with high initial reactivity. How might this finding influence how you set priorities, sequence goals, or adapt intervention for children starting with differences in engagement and regulation?
3. What specific outcomes or types of data collection help you determine whether your current practice is effectively supporting children's emotion regulation?



## Explore More NBDI Articles

Gulsrud, A. C., Jahromi, L. B., & Kasari, C. (2010). The co-regulation of emotions between mothers and their children with autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 40(2), 227–237.

Ingersoll, B., & Wainer, A. (2013). Initial efficacy of Project ImPACT: A parent-mediated social communication intervention for young children with ASD. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 43(12), 2943–2952.

Liu, W.-X., Shan, L., Li, C.-L., Liu, Y.-M., Xue, Y., OuYang, Y.-L., & Jia, F.-Y. (2025). Effects of the Early Start Denver Model on emotional dysregulation and behavior problems in children with autism spectrum disorder. *BMC Pediatrics*, 25(1), 79.

# Playful Possibilities

*Creating Meaningful Connections and Fun with Cardboard Boxes*

*Welcome to "Playful Possibilities: Everyday Items, Endless Fun," where we explore how everyday items can foster social engagement, motivation, and communication in young autistic children. We'll explore how everyday items can support foundational social skills, from sustained attention to boosting motivation and social engagement.*

*Everyday Items*



*Endless Fun*

Cardboard boxes might seem like everyday clutter, but they're actually incredible tools for play and connection! Their size, shape, and versatility open the door to creative activities that support sensory exploration, joint attention, and imaginative thinking. These simple materials can spark joyful interactions and help children engage with others in ways that feel fun and natural. Here are three playful ways to use cardboard boxes to encourage meaningful social engagement!

# 1 *Peek-a-Boo* Playhouse

## Description

Cut windows and doors into a cardboard box to create a small playhouse.

Use it to play peek-a-boo, encouraging your child to open and close the flaps while taking turns. If the box is large, you can also have the child hide their body under it, while you lift the box to find them.

## Learning Opportunities

This activity fosters joint attention, sustained social interaction, and imitation of actions, as you and the child engage in back-and-forth play.

## NDBI Strategies

**Following Your Child's Lead:** Let your child decide when to open or close the windows or door, and mirror their actions to build a connection. Get creative and silly by:



**Pretending to be surprised:** Gasp dramatically and say, “Oh, there you are!” when they peek out.



**Playing hide-and-seek:** Pretend to “look” for them in the wrong place, calling their name and asking, “Where could you be?” before they pop out.



**Using playful voices or characters:** Pretend to be a silly animal or character knocking on the “door,” asking, “Can I come in?”



**Adding sound effects:** Make fun noises like a creaky door sound or a playful “ta-da!” when they open or close the flaps.

# 2 Treasure Hunt Tunnel

## Description

Transform the box into a tunnel by opening both ends. Hide small objects or “treasures” inside and encourage your child to crawl through and find them. If the box is large enough, join in the fun by crawling or chasing them through the tunnel, adding an extra layer of excitement and engagement to the activity.

## Learning Opportunities

This activity supports gross motor skills, problem-solving, and motivation through exploration and shared engagement.

## NDBI Strategies



**Building Anticipation:** Before your child crawls through, say, “What will we find in the tunnel? Let’s see!” to build excitement. Look excitedly at your child as you move closer to the box, showing your enthusiasm for the activity. You can also gently block the tunnel entry with your hand or a soft object as a playful obstruction, encouraging your child to indicate that they want you to move so they can go inside. This adds an element of fun and fosters communication and engagement.



**Capturing Motivation:** Use your child’s favorite toys or objects to spark their interest in the activity. To keep their engagement high, introduce new or novel items they haven’t seen before, adding an element of surprise and curiosity to the play



**Expanding Communication:** Label the items they find, and encourage simple phrases like “I found it!” or “Look, it’s a ball!” “It’s Bluey!”

# 3 *Sorting* Surprise Box

## Description

Cut multiple holes in the top of a cardboard box and color-code them. Provide matching colored objects for your child to sort and drop into the corresponding holes.

## Learning Opportunities

This activity enhances fine motor skills, color recognition, and early problem-solving, as well as back-and-forth turn-taking with others.

## NDBI Strategies



**Modeling and Imitation:** Demonstrate how to sort an object by saying, “Blue in,” as you place it in the correct spot, then invite your child to try. Vary the speed of your actions to keep the activity fun and engaging—drop items in quickly, move slowly for suspense, or let them fall from up high to create excitement. These playful variations can capture your child’s attention and encourage them to imitate your actions.



**Promoting Shared Attention:** Sit face-to-face with your child while modeling the task. Smile warmly, share excited facial expressions, and use coordinated eye gaze to capture their attention. Encourage joint attention by pointing to or looking at the activity together, helping your child stay engaged and connected during the interaction.



## Conclusion

*Cardboard boxes offer endless possibilities for creativity, connection, and skill-building with young autistic children. By incorporating NDBI strategies like following your child's lead, building anticipation, and fostering joint attention, these simple household items can become powerful tools for meaningful play and learning.*

# How-to-Hub

*Scaffold New Skills with Just-Right Support*



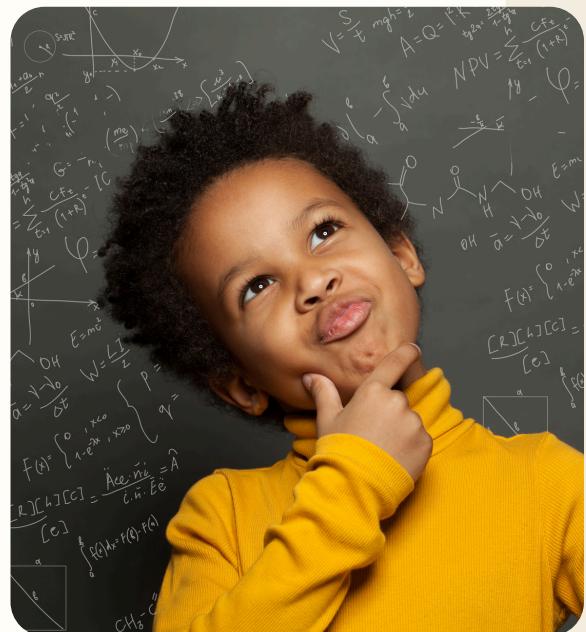
## How-to-Hub

Welcome to the How-To Hub!

This month, we're diving into one of the most foundational strategies in Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Interventions (NDBIs): scaffolding. Young children—especially those developing social communication, play, and cognitive skills—often need more than exposure to new experiences. They need support that's tailored to their unique learning profile and gradually reduced as they gain independence.

Scaffolding means providing just enough help to let a child succeed, without doing the task for them. As the child becomes more capable, you slowly fade your support—helping them stretch from what they can do with help to what they can do on their own.

Break down complex skills into smaller, achievable steps and offer prompts, cues, or models as needed—then fade those supports as the child learns. Think about what comes just before success, and give help right at that moment.





*Scaffolding helps the child feel successful, engaged, and confident—without being overwhelmed. It promotes active participation and reduces frustration. Over time, this builds independence, resilience, and true skill mastery.*





## 1. Dressing Routines

- What to do:** If a child struggles to put on shoes, start by helping them slide one foot in, then fade to just handing them the shoe.
- Why it works:** You're reducing task difficulty while keeping the child active in the routine.
- Pro Tip:** Narrate the steps aloud ("First the sock, now the shoe!") to support language development too.



## 2. Snack Time Routines

- What to do:** If a child is learning to ask for a snack, hold up two choices and wait. If no response, model the choice ("Cracker or banana?"), then fade to just holding up the items silently.
- Why it works:** You're supporting expressive communication without demanding it immediately.
- Pro Tip:** Celebrate any attempt—eye gaze, point, sound, or word—and build from there.



## 3. Pretend Play Scenarios



**What to do:** If a child is unsure how to play with a tea set, model a simple action (“Pour tea... sip!”), then hand them the cup to try.



**Why it works:** You’re showing what to do while still giving space for child-led exploration.



**Pro Tip:** Pause and use expectant gaze—this gives the child time to imitate without pressure

## 4. Book Reading



**What to do:** While reading a favorite book, leave off the last word in a familiar phrase (“Brown bear, brown bear, what do you \_\_?”).



**Why it works:** This cue supports expressive language without requiring a prompt.



**Pro Tip:** If the child struggles, go back to modeling, then pause again next time for another chance.

## 5. Movement & Transitions



**What to do:** For a child learning to transition between activities, use a visual schedule or countdown with gestures (“First blocks, then snack... 5-4-3...”).

**Why it works:** Scaffolding helps children understand what’s next and feel prepared.

**Pro Tip:** Fade supports over time—move from countdowns to just a verbal reminder or visual cue.



# Ask and Answer

*Your Questions, Expert Insights*



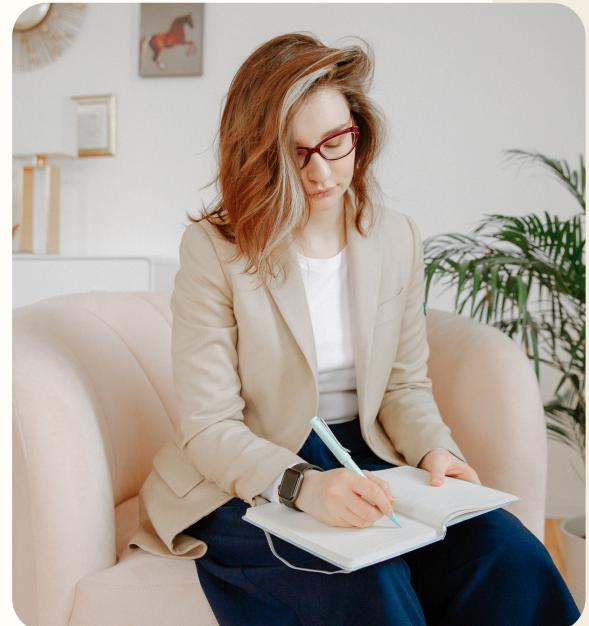
## Ask & Answer

Welcome to the Ask and Answer section of the newsletter, where we address your most pressing questions about Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Interventions (NDBIs). This is your space to explore the “how-to’s” of integrating NDBI strategies into your practice, gain insights on common challenges, and discover practical solutions from experts in the field.

Whether you’re curious about coaching caregivers, adapting NDBI for a specific setting, or fine-tuning your intervention strategies, we’ve got you covered. Each month, we select reader-submitted questions and provide thoughtful, actionable answers to help you make an impact in your work with autistic children and their families.

Have a question you’d like answered in the newsletter? Send us an email at [support@thendbinavigator.com](mailto:support@thendbinavigator.com)

Together, we can learn, grow, and empower each other to deliver meaningful, evidence-based support.





## Reader Question

*What are some simple ways to integrate NDBI strategies into everyday activities like snack time or getting dressed?*



## Our Answer

That's a great question! Everyday routines like snack time and getting dressed are ideal for embedding Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Intervention (NDBI) strategies because they occur regularly, are meaningful to the child, and offer countless chances for interaction, communication, and learning. The goal is to slow down, follow the child's lead, and use these moments to build engagement and connection.

# *From Question to Action in 5 Steps*

1

## **Follow the Child's Lead During the Routine**

Start by observing what the child is drawn to—do they love peeling the banana or trying to zip their coat? Use those naturally motivating moments to build shared engagement. When you join their focus rather than redirecting it, you're more likely to capture their attention and foster interaction.

- ✓ Observe where their attention naturally goes during the routine
- ✓ Wait and let them initiate the next step when possible
- ✓ Join in by commenting or imitating their actions to build a connection
- ✓ Let them guide the pace and sequence of the routine when appropriate



# From Question to Action in 5 Steps

2

## Use Shared Control to Encourage Participation

Create simple opportunities for turn-taking by holding onto an item and pausing with an expectant look, or offering limited choices (e.g., “Red shirt or blue shirt?”). These small holds invite the child to communicate—through gestures, eye gaze, or words—with pressure.



- ✓ Hold one shoe or utensil and wait for a signal (look, reach, vocalization)
- ✓ Offer a clear but limited choice using objects, visuals, or words
- ✓ Gently guide the child’s hand to indicate a choice if needed
- ✓ Use routines like “Ready...Set...Go!” to structure shared actions

3

## Narrate and Model Communication

Embed language naturally by describing what’s happening: “You’re spreading the peanut butter!” or “First sock, then shoe!” Pair actions with simple words, and model key phrases like “Help,” “All done,” or “More?” to encourage functional communication.



- ✓ Use short, simple phrases that match what the child is doing
- ✓ Emphasize key words with tone and repetition  
Model first-person language: “I want more,” “I did it!”
- ✓ Use gestures or signs to support understanding if needed

# *From Question to Action in 5 Steps*

4

## Add Playful Structure

Turn routines into games! Make silly sounds while brushing teeth, sing a favorite song while getting dressed, or play a pretend cooking game during snack. Predictable play routines increase engagement and support back-and-forth interaction.



- ✓ Turn zipping a coat into a countdown game: “3...2...1... ZIP!”
- ✓ Use stuffed animals or puppets to help demonstrate steps
- ✓ Add a silly twist: “Oh no! Your sock is on your hand!”
- ✓ Repeat the same playful sequence each time to build anticipation

5

## Scaffold and Fade Support Over Time

Celebrate participation at any level, and gradually offer less support as the child becomes more independent. For example, if a child points to a snack, respond warmly, then model the word: “Cracker!” Over time, encourage more complex responses like choices or requests.



- ✓ Start with full prompts (e.g., modeling or guiding the hand)
- ✓ Fade to partial prompts, then just visual or gestural cues
- ✓ Pause longer to give the child time to respond independently
- ✓ Reinforce any effort to communicate, then shape toward more complex responses over time

By using NDBI strategies during daily routines, you help children build skills in natural, low-pressure ways. These moments—repeated every day—create powerful opportunities for growth, connection, and joyful learning.

# Webinar Events

*Learn Today. Apply Tomorrow.*



JUN  
25

*Natalia Santamaria, M.Sc.*

**NDBI Caregiver  
Coaching**



JUL  
10

*Janet Harder, R-SLP*

**AAC and Supporting  
Communication**



AUG  
28

*Dr. Jamie Hughes-Lika*

**Finding and Building  
Engagement in ESDM**



SEP  
25

*Meghan Kane*

**NDBI in a Group  
Clinical Setting**

# NDBI CONFERENCE

Connections



*Connecting Developmental and Behavioral Science to  
Improve Interventions For Young Autistic Children*



**Where**



**When**

**Live via BehaviorLive**

**October 23-25, 2025**

<https://behaviorlive.com/conferences/ndbi2025/home>

*Checkout What's New!*



**New 3-Day  
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**Post-Conference  
Workshop**



**Translation  
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**SEASONS**  
EARLY CHILDHOOD

SEASONSEARLYCHILDHOOD.COM



## Dr. Sienna Windsor

PhD, BCBA-D, LBA



### Individualized Intervention

Assessments, goal setting, and one-on-one teaching.



### Coaching and Family Education

Support using NDBI strategies with your child across daily routines to address challenges and achieve goals that are important to your family.



### Consultation and Training

Resources and guidance for families, educators, and organizations on autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood.