

The NDBI Navigator

N^{otes}

JULY 2025 | ISSUE 06



Monthly Newsletter

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

By The NDBI Navigator™

Online Courses

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

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ESDM Advanced Workshop Supplemental Modules

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Behavior Technicians, RBTs, Paraprofessionals

T19: NBDI Essentials for Autism Providers

55 Lessons
4 PDUs



Behavior Technicians, RBTs, Paraprofessionals

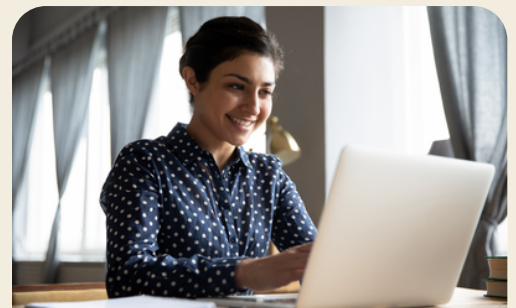
T18: Patterns in Play (Autism Providers)

23 Lessons
1 PDU



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

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2 CEUs



MC01: Writing ABA Session Notes Master Class

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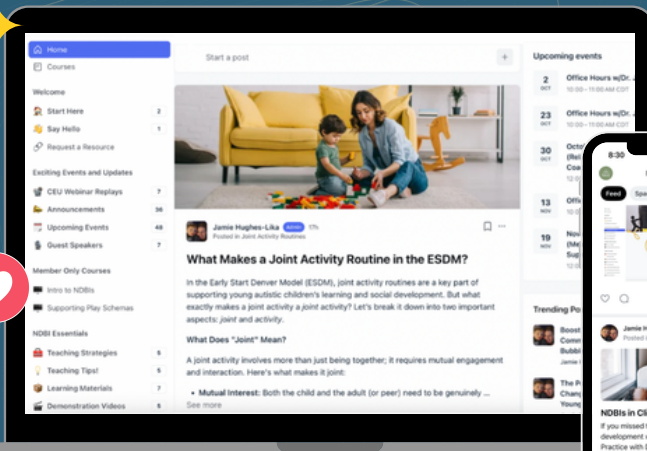
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NDBI Events

Letter from the Editors

Dear NDBI Community,

Welcome to the July issue of The NDBI Navigator Notes! We hope this summer has brought you moments of rest, reflection, and playful connection. This month, we're exploring the balance between structure and spontaneity—something at the heart of high-quality Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Interventions (NDBIs).

Our Research Roundup highlights an important article by Vibert et al. (2020), which explores the use of the Measure of NDBI Strategy Implementation–Caregiver Change (MONSI-CC). This tool offers valuable insights into how caregivers implement NDBI strategies over time and can help researchers and practitioners evaluate meaningful change in real-world contexts.

In our How-To Hub, we're focusing on the powerful combination of repetition and variation in play routines. We'll explore how repeating routines builds predictability and confidence, while small variations keep children engaged, flexible, and curious.

This month's Playful Possibilities turns an ordinary item—paper towel tubes—into a treasure trove of developmental opportunities. From sound play to pretend telescopes, these simple materials can spark rich interactions and imaginative learning.

In Ask & Answer, we're responding to a reader's question about how to use focused interests, such as spinning or lining up toys, to promote communication. We'll explore how honoring these interests can become the foundation for shared engagement, language growth, and connection.

As always, our goal is to provide you with practical, evidence-based tools to support your work—and the children and families you serve. Thank you for being a part of this growing and committed NDBI community.

With appreciation,

Dr. Jamie and Dr. Sienna

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



Dr. Jamie



Dr. Sienna

Research Highlights for Real-World Impact

The article by Vibert et al. (2020) introduces the Measure of NDBI Strategy Implementation—Caregiver Change (MONSI-CC), an observational tool developed to assess how caregivers implement core strategies from Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Interventions (NDBIs) during parent-mediated interventions (PMIs) for young children with autism. Initial evaluations of the MONSI-CC showed high reliability and validity for capturing change in caregiver behavior across intervention models. These findings contribute to our understanding of caregiver fidelity of implementation and may help identify which strategies are more difficult or take more time to learn. The MONSI-CC has utility as a tool to guide and support individualized intervention planning and progress monitoring.

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Reflection Questions

1. How might consistent use of a standardized caregiver strategy measure like the MONSI-CC enhance interdisciplinary collaboration across early intervention teams?
2. Which domains of caregiver implementation (e.g., Child-Guided Interactions vs. Opportunities for Engagement) do you think are most challenging for families you work with, and why?
3. How could data from the MONSI-CC be used to inform real-time coaching or adapt treatment plans for individual families?



Explore More NBDI Articles

Kasari, C., Gulsrud, A., Paparella, T., Helleman, G., & Berry, K. (2015). Randomized comparative efficacy study of parent-mediated interventions for toddlers with autism. *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology*, 83(3), 554.

Pickles, A., Le Couteur, A., Leadbitter, K., Salomone, E., Cole-Fletcher, R., Tobin, H., ... & Green, J. (2016). Parent-mediated social communication therapy for young children with autism (PACT): long-term follow-up of a randomised controlled trial. *The Lancet*, 388(10059), 2501-2509.

Shalev, R. A., Lavine, C., & Di Martino, A. (2020). A systematic review of the role of parent characteristics in parent-mediated interventions for children with autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities*, 32, 1-21.

Playful Possibilities

Creating Meaningful Connections and Fun with Paper Towel Tubes

Welcome to "Playful Possibilities: Everyday Items, Endless Fun," where we explore creative ways to use household items to foster social engagement, attention, and motivation in young autistic children. In this article, we'll dive into the surprising versatility of paper towel tubes. By incorporating NDBI strategies, we'll explore how these simple tubes can support foundational social skills, from sustained attention to boosting motivation and engagement.

Everyday Items



*Fun with Paper
Towel Tube*

Paper towel tubes may seem like basic household items, but they offer a world of play possibilities! Their hollow structure and easy-to-hold shape allow for creative play that enhances sensory exploration, turn-taking, and focused attention. These activities not only create moments of joyful bonding but also help children connect and engage at their own pace. Let's dive into three engaging activities using paper towel tubes to promote meaningful social interactions!

1 "Echo Tube" Sound Game

Description

Use the tube like a "telephone" by speaking or making silly sounds through it, encouraging your child to take a turn or respond. Hold the tube near your mouth, and take turns speaking or listening through it to create an "echo" effect.

Learning Opportunities

This activity helps with turn-taking, auditory attention, and joint engagement, as your child listens for sounds, watches your actions, and takes a turn with the tube.



NDBI Strategies



Building Anticipation: Before making a sound, say, "Are you ready? Here comes the sound!" This builds attention and prepares your child for what's coming.



Encouraging Communication: Take turns holding the tube. You might say, "My turn to make a sound" and then hand it to your child, saying, "Your turn!" This fosters social reciprocity.



Following Your Child's Lead: If they start making their own sounds or gestures, copy their sounds back through the tube to build connection and shared play.

2 *“Roll and Race”* Game

Description

Roll a small ball, toy car, or even a pom-pom through the tube and encourage your child to watch where it comes out. Take turns rolling items to each other through the tube, or set up two tubes side-by-side for a friendly race!

Learning Opportunities

This game enhances attention, anticipation, and social engagement, as children focus on the movement through the tube, take turns, and celebrate the rolling “race.”

NDBI Strategies

- ★ **Turn Taking:** Offer a choice of objects to roll, like a small ball or toy car, saying, “Which one do you want to roll?” Providing choices builds motivation and independence.
- ★ **Joint Attention and Counting:** Before releasing the item, say, “Ready... set...go!” to build excitement and help your child focus on the moment the object will roll through.
- ★ **Waiting for Your Child’s Response:** If they show a preference for certain items or a favorite way of playing, follow their lead to keep the play fun and engaging.



3 *"Tube Telescope"* Adventure

Description

Turn the tube into a pretend “telescope” and go on an adventure, “searching” for different things in the room. Take turns using the “telescope” and narrating what you each see to encourage attention to surroundings and joint play.

Learning Opportunities

This imaginative play activity supports attention, observation skills, and joint engagement, as your child focuses on their “findings” and shares them with you.

NDBI Strategies



Providing Choices: Say, “I see something blue!” as you look through the tube, then pass it to your child and ask, “What do you see?” This models observation and encourages them to focus.



Building Anticipation and Attention: Hold the tube up and look around dramatically before “discovering” something. This captures their interest and keeps them engaged.



Narrating Actions: If your child begins to make discoveries of their own, follow along with enthusiasm, copying their expressions or responses. This validates their choices and strengthens social connection.

Enhancing Attention

Use pauses and playful expressions before each sound or roll to create anticipation, such as saying, “Here it comes!” This helps children focus and builds attention.

Boosting Motivation

Change up the items or sounds used with the tube to add variety. Notice what your child responds to most—such as a favorite sound or object—and integrate that to keep motivation high.

Supporting Social Engagement

Throughout each activity, engage with your child by copying their sounds or movements, sharing smiles, and narrating what’s happening. These small connections build a sense of shared play and mutual enjoyment, reinforcing social bonds.

Conclusion

Paper towel tubes offer endless possibilities for creativity, connection, and skill-building with young autistic children. By integrating NDBI strategies like turn-taking, joint engagement, and providing choices, you can transform these simple household items into tools for meaningful social interaction and fun learning.

A photograph of three children sitting on the floor, engaged in a painting activity. They are holding paint containers and brushes. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text 'How-to-Hub' is written in a large, white, serif font, and the subtitle 'Discover Practical Tips for Achieving Real Results' is written below it in a smaller, yellow, italicized serif font.

How-to-Hub

Discover Practical Tips for Achieving Real Results



to build mastery and confidence. Variation supports generalization—the ability to use a skill in new places, or routines. Let’s explore how you can support students by repeating familiar routines while introducing new ones.



Provide Repetition with Variation to Build Flexibility & Generalization

Choose one play routine or learning target (like making a choice, labeling, or taking turns), and repeat it across the day or week using different toys, people, or settings. Small changes in how the routine looks, sounds, or feels help the child apply what they've learned in new ways.



Five Everyday Ways to Use Repetition with Variation

1. Building Block Play

- ★ **What to do:** Build towers using different types of blocks (wooden, magnetic, foam) or build in different rooms.
- 💡 **Why it works:** The core play is the same—stacking and knocking down—but the materials and context shift slightly.
- ★ **Pro Tip:** Add a silly surprise (e.g., “Should we knock it over with a dinosaur or a car?”) to build engagement.



2. Snack Time Routines

- ★ **What to do:** Practice making choices, requesting help, or using utensils across different snacks or settings.
- 💡 **Why it works:** The child learns that “I need help” applies whether they’re peeling a banana or opening yogurt.
- ★ **Pro Tip:** Change who gives the snack (e.g., parent, sibling, teacher) to generalize across people.



Five Everyday Ways to Use Positive Affect

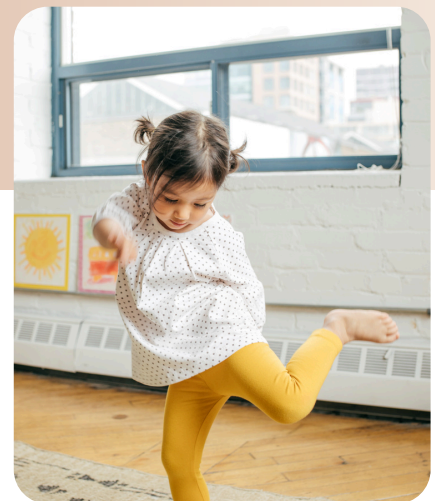
3. Pretend Play Scenarios

- ★ **What to do:** Repeat the same pretend scenario (e.g., going to the doctor, having a picnic) using different toys or in different rooms.
- 💡 **Why it works:** Helps the child apply social scripts and language in flexible ways.
- ★ **Pro Tip:** Add one new prop or variation each time to spark creativity and build problem-solving.



4. Movement Games

- ★ **What to do:** Play “Ready, Set, Go!” using different types of movement—running, rolling, spinning, jumping.
- 💡 **Why it works:** Children learn to respond to the same cue across different physical experiences.
- ★ **Pro Tip:** Try varying the setting (indoor vs. outdoor) or who gives the cue.



Five Everyday Ways to Use Positive Affect

5. Story Time



What to do: Read the same book across several days, but vary how it's read—change voices, use puppets, act it out.



Why it works: Movement paired with positive affect boosts anticipation, supports communication (like requesting “Go!”), and encourages turn-taking.



Pro Tip: Try adding silly options: “*Should I spin you like a dinosaur or a race car?*” and act them out with over-the-top animation.



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

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





Reader Question

“A child I work with prefers spinning or lining up objects instead of playing with toys. How can I use their interests to encourage communication?”



Our Answer

That’s a great question! Many autistic children naturally gravitate toward activities like spinning objects or lining things up—often because these actions are predictable, soothing, and give them a sense of control. In Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Interventions (NDBIs), we don’t aim to stop these behaviors—instead, we build on them as a bridge to connection, engagement, and communication. The key is to follow their lead and gently invite interaction into what already brings them joy.

From Question to Action in 5 Steps

1 Discover What the Behavior Communicates or Regulates

Start by observing the why behind the behavior:

- ✔ Is the spinning or lining up giving them visual input or calming sensory feedback?
- ✔ Do they use this routine when they're overwhelmed or unsure what to do?
- ✔ Is it a way to explore objects or create order?

Understanding what the child gets out of the activity will help you join it meaningfully and respectfully.



From Question to Action in 5 Steps

2 Join the Activity Without Disrupting It

Instead of redirecting, try joining in:



- ✓ Narrate play in a low-pressure way: *"You're lining them up so straight—wow!"*
- ✓ Hand them the next item in the line or offer a similar object to spin
- ✓ Add gentle variation: *Place a block sideways or a car in the line and say, "Silly car! Is that okay?"*

This shows the child that you respect their interests while inviting them into a shared moment.

3 Embed Opportunities for Communication

Once you're part of the routine, you can build small, natural chances for communication:



- ✓ Pause and hold an item: *"Which one next?"*
- ✓ Offer choices using visuals or gestures: *"Car or truck?"*
- ✓ Use predictable routines like *"Ready, set... GO!"* for spinning toys to encourage vocalizations or gestures

Start with nonvocal responses (e.g., reaching, looking) and gradually shape toward more complex forms of communication.

From Question to Action in 5 Steps

4

Celebrate and Expand Shared Control

Use your interaction to introduce small shifts while still following the child's lead:



- ✓ Take brief turns (*"Can I spin one too?" or "Let's line these up together"*)

Add a playful interruption (*"Oh no! One is missing!"*) and wait to see how they respond

- ✓ Reinforce any signs of flexibility, interaction, or attention shifting.

This helps build joint attention and turn-taking skills, both essential for social communication.

5

Build Routines Around Their Interests

Once a child starts to engage with you through their preferred play, you can:



- ✓ Turn lining up into a delivery game (*e.g., "Let's drive them to the garage!"*)
- ✓ Spin objects together and count down or make silly sounds
- ✓ Use the theme in art, songs, or books to generalize learning across settings

These small steps help shift solitary interests into shared routines without making the child feel pressured or misunderstood.

By following the child's lead and inviting them into a connected, communicative experience through their preferred play, you're honoring their interests and helping them build skills for more flexible, joyful engagement

Webinar Events

Learn Today. Apply Tomorrow.



Janet Harder, R-SLP
**AAC and Supporting
Communication**



Dr. Jamie Hughes-Lika
**Finding and Building
Engagement in ESDM**



Dr. Laurie Vismara
**Enhancing Coaching
Practices to Support
Fidelity**

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*Connecting Developmental and Behavioral Science to
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Individualized Intervention

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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.